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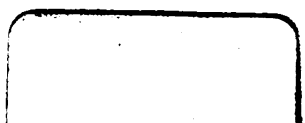
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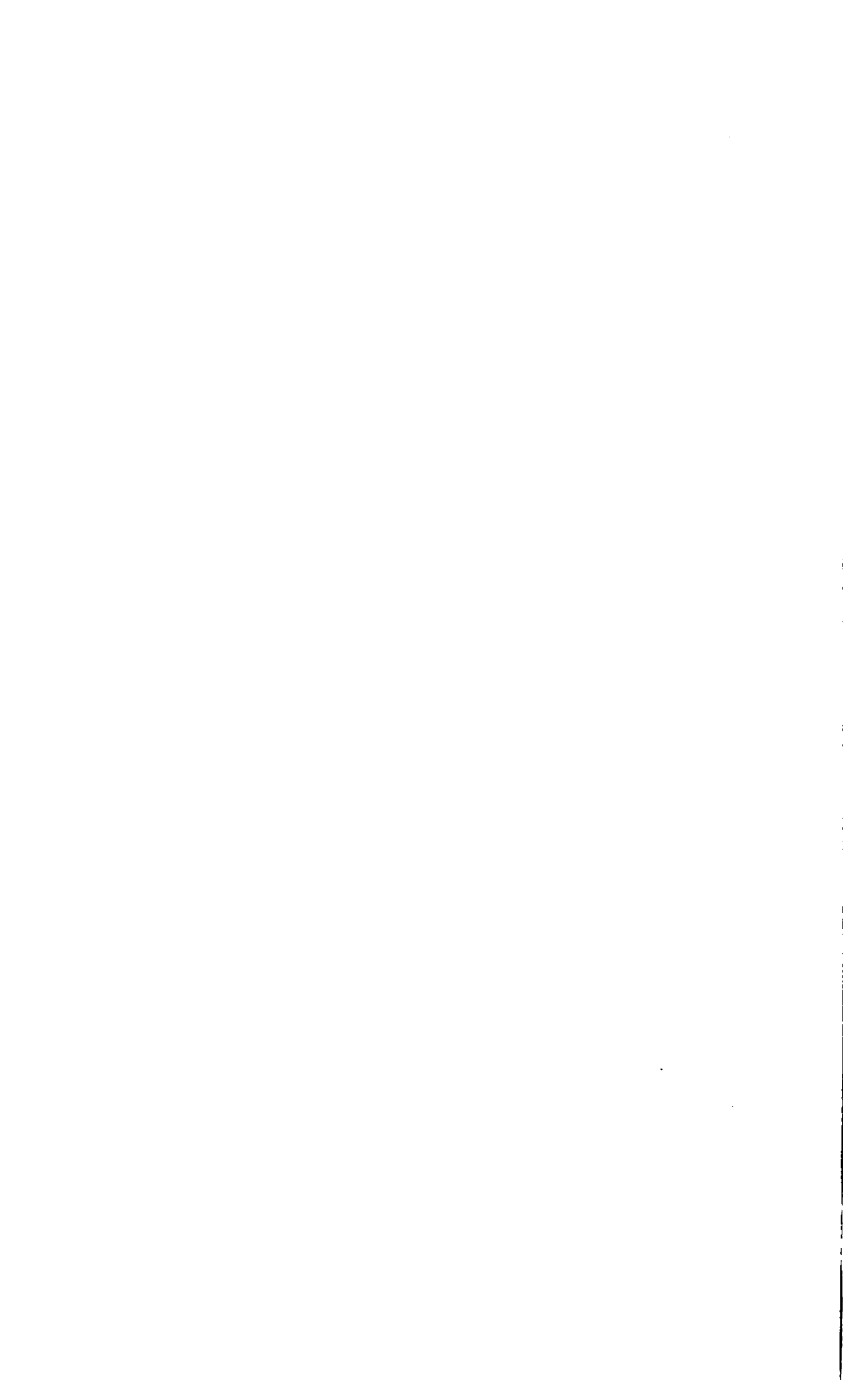
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THE ROMANCE OF GEORGE VILLIERS

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

FACTS AND IDEAS

THE ROMANCE OF EMPIRE

FOUNDERS OF THE EMPIRE

MEN AND WOMEN OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

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THE FAMILY OF THE DUKE OF BUCKINGHAM

FROM THE PAINTING BY GERARD HONTHORST IN THE NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY

THE ROMANCE OF GEORGE VILLIERS

FIRST DUKE OF BUCKINGHAM

AND SOME MEN AND WOMEN
OF THE STUART COURT

BY

PHILIP GIBBS

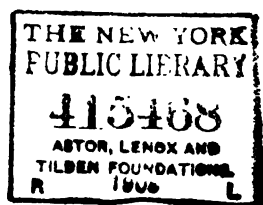
WITH TWENTY ILLUSTRATIONS

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ARJY WEB
OLUBI
BARBU

FOREWORD

I SUPPOSE that among those who daily pass Villiers Street and Buckingham Street in the Strand, or stop to glance at the grey stone-work in the Embankment Gardens, which was once the river gate to York House, scarcely one in a thousand gives a thought to George Villiers, first Duke of Buckingham, whose ghost—if ghosts walk—must surely haunt these streets and this site of old-time splendour. But to those who read history the memory of Buckingham is curiously haunting. The tradition of a personal beauty dazzling to the eyes of his contemporaries still lingers in old letters and old memoirs, and this beauty of the man which was the origin of his astonishing fortune, still has some power, in mere remembrance, to move hearts in his favour, though reason may condemn him. Yet he had many shining qualities beyond his handsome face. In two Courts, where there were many men of splendid presence and high intellect, George Villiers, whose intellect was not so trained and subtle, bore them down by a daring magnificence, and careless arrogance, and brilliant charm of manners. The favours that were lavished on him by two kings he took lightly, and being raised from quite a humble estate (though a gentleman by birth) held his place easily as Lord Paramount over many great noblemen whose rank was theirs by inheritance. He had few friends beyond his Royal masters—though many flatterers—after he had attained the pinnacle of his prodigious fortune, and many hated him with a deadly and dangerous hatred. Yet he was perfectly careless of their enmity, and defied them with a laughing grace or with imperturbable insolence. As King's favourite,

the great offices of State were often in his hands, and frank in his friendship and with a simple candour of offence, he made and unmade many men who ruled or misruled England. He was a great adventurer, and played always, or nearly always, for his own hand, having, to tell the truth, few scruples of conscience to stand in the way of self-advancement or personal pique and pleasure. Yet he had a sincere sense of patriotism, identifying himself closely with the interests of his country. And there was nothing mean in his character, however black one's verdict may paint him. Not even his enemies, who were many and eager to defame him, accused him of pettiness of spirit. His very faults were grandiloquent, and his prodigal generosity, his squandering magnificence of hospitality, his proud patronage, his vast insatiable capacity for wealth (though he was not tainted with the corruption of his time), his utter disregard of prudence in his private and public acts, give him a kind of vainglory. In one way it seems that he has no equal in English or any other history. As King's favourite he held his place in two reigns. That is certainly remarkable. Favourites rise quickly, but owing their advancement to the humours of a monarch their honours tumble about their ears when he is out of temper or tired of a familiar face. The chief favourites of kings have seldom held their favours uncontested. New stars have arisen and the old ones have gone to earth like spent rockets. But the first Duke of Buckingham, who helped to cause the downfall of one great favourite, not merely kept his own position clear and undimmed until the death of the king who had made him, but succeeded to the full favours of that king's son and successor, and, again, held them constantly until his own quick death by the assassin's knife. In mere endurance as King's favourite, Buckingham's career is astonishing, but when one reflects upon the great contrast in the characters of the first James and the first Charles—the one a warm-hearted, weak-willed, buffoon-loving gossip (though not without a certain shrewdness and pedantic wisdom), the other a cold, pure, proud, sensitive man—one is startled by the extraordinary personal magnetism of a favourite who could

be foremost in the affections of both such masters. It is easy to write him down as a scoundrel. Judged by modern standards it would be difficult to deny the title to him. Yet gentlemen of his own time, and of undenied honour and purity, found many virtues in him even after his death, when it was no longer necessary to look carefully for virtues in the hope of favours. The truth is that, like many others among men, he was neither demon nor angel. Indeed, if there was any swing in the moral balance it was on the side of the angel. If we may read Buckingham rightly, and it is not easy, he never deliberately set out to do devilish things. He was, no doubt, a complete egoist. Any moral principles he may have had—and we do not quickly find them—were tossed on and off as lightly as his jewelled cloaks, and he took revenge in an open-handed way of a discovered enemy. But he had not a black heart, nourishing secret venom and scheming horrid things. Hot-blooded, impetuous, unreflecting, his faults were open to the world, for he had a largeness of spirit and real courage, and, on the other side, one must set his ungrudging generosity to relatives and all who had his friendship, his loyalty to those who had lifted him up, his warmth of affection (though he allowed himself at times the license of his age) to his good wife, and to his children, his splendid patronage of the fine arts, his natural gallantry and elegance and charm by which he did full credit to his fortune. As a character of romance he has hardly an equal in English history of the Stuart times. The adventure in Spain, the French marriage journey, when, in his rash way, he helped to embroil us with France because he dared to presume to the Queen's love, are extraordinary episodes in which he is surrounded with the glamour of romantic adventure. The two great masters of historical romance have not failed to see the drama of his career, and Scott in "The Fortunes of Nigel" (most admirable picture of the reign of King James), Dumas in "The Three Musketeers" and its sequel, have introduced the personality of the man who was the centre of political intrigue and adventure in the Courts of England and France. He was, indeed, the typical adventurer

of a time when it was the recognized profession to be an adventurer for king's favours, and to those whose imagination is stirred by the magnificence and pageantry, the scheming, the plotting, the turbulence, the perils, the drama and the great actors of a period which stands midway between mediævalism and modernity, the career of George Villiers should have an extraordinary interest and attraction. That, at least, has been my experience in writing this book, though the reading of it may excite other feelings. In spite of the labour of digging out Buckingham's character and career from old chronicles and memoirs in the death-vault atmosphere of the British Museum, it has been quite a gay task, for the personality of the man grips one, and his ghost is very gallant. If my book is dull, it is a grievous sin and not Buckingham's fault ; at least, I may claim that it is not a second-hand account of him, for I have gone always to the original authorities for my facts, though not ignoring Gardiner's vast knowledge of the Stuart period. I may also claim that this book is the only complete life of Villiers written since the discovery of many letters and documents which give the key to the great favourite's character and adventures. I hope that with this key I have not quite failed to unlock the heart of "Dogge Steenie," His Grace of Buckingham.

P. G.

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THE FIRST DUKE OF BUCKINGHAM

CHAPTER I

VILLIERS COMES TO COURT

IT was some time in the year 1614 that a young gentleman named George Villiers was first noticed among the hangers-on of King James's Court: a rabble crowd of Scotsmen who had come south with empty pouches and great expectations, of young English squires from the provinces eager to get within the circle of Royal patronage, of broken-down gentlemen and threadbare knights who by flattery and obsequious service to greater men picked up crumbs that fell from rich tables. The young Villiers, twenty-two years of age, had all his fortune before him and none on his back. If we may believe Arthur Wilson, the dramatist and historian, Mr. George Villiers, at this time, "had not more than fifty pounds a year," and there is further testimony as to the poverty of one who was afterwards so richly favoured, given by the knight, Symonds D'Ewes, of St. John's College, Cambridge, and later High Sheriff for Suffolk, who in his autobiography (where we may find many gossip details of the Stuart Court) declared that this George Villiers was, before his fortune, seen at the Cambridge races, "in an old black suit, broken out in various places."

His dress was shabby, but it did not hide that handsome face and graceful, supple figure which in the first flush of manhood distinguished Villiers among any company, and gave him, in spite of poverty, an air of natural nobility. Exactly when this beauty of person attracted the eyes of a king who was always extraordinarily fascinated by fine faces—or, as the Earl

of Clarendon says in his stately way, "whose nature and disposition was very flowing in affection towards persons so adorned"—we can hardly tell. Sir Henry Wotton, whom we know to have been one of Buckingham's best friends, says that it was at Apthorpe in a Progress, or masque, that James first took a liking for his person. But it was at Cambridge, when the play *Ignoramus* was performed before the King's Majesty by the students of the University, that it became noticeable, among those who were quick to watch the direction of their master's eyes, that this George Villiers was distinguished by the King's favourable glances. It was probably then that he obtained his introduction to James, put forward by courtiers, so jealous of the reigning favourite, the Earl of Somerset, whose gloomy arrogance was now unendurable, that they were scheming constantly to set up some new star, their own man, whose power and influence would be used in their favour.

They were willing to lay out some little money on him, as a promising speculation—Sir Thomas Lake, we are told, afterwards bought the Cup-bearer's office for him—and changed that rusty black suit, "broken out in places," for a dress that showed up his face and figure to better advantage, and gave him a more easy entry to a Court where dress was magnificent. These schemers against Somerset may have well seen that this young man was marked out by destiny to be a favourite. There are many witnesses to his winning and affable manners, and sweetness of disposition, in these early days, and if they raised him from fifty pounds a year to the higher wages of King's favourite, they might count upon him as their servant. He would be their decoy duck for rich game. The Herberts, the Seymours, the Russells, and other noble families of English stock, hated Somerset not less because he had been Robert Kerr, one of those Scotsmen who crowded round the King greedy for office and gold (to the detriment of the English, who also had appetites), and they favoured Villiers as the new man, partly because he was an Englishman and of good birth.* Contemporary gossip says that William, Earl of Pembroke, the greatest gentleman at the Court of James, and Lucy, Countess of Bedford, supplied him with money, and ran him as the favourite. But Clarendon and Wotton, whose evidence is quite

* Lloyd.

trustworthy, lay stress on the personal qualifications of George Villiers as the origin of his good fortune.

"The Duke," says Clarendon, our English Plutarch, "was indeed a very extraordinary person; and never any man in any age, nor I believe in any country or nation, rose in so short a time to so much greatness of honour, fame, and fortune, upon no other advantage of recommendation than of the beauty and gracefulness and becomingness of his person. And I have not the least purpose of undervaluing his good parts and qualities (of which there will be occasion shortly to give testimony) when I say that his first introduction into favour was purely from the handsomeness of his person."

There must have been many meetings between the King and Villiers before he was taken into service and recognized as the favourite, though some contemporary writers would almost cause us to imagine that the King loved him at first sight. But in the "*Aulicus Coquinariæ*," that strange collection of Court scandals and anecdotes, we see something of the intrigues and schemings of the enemies of Somerset to set up this new star. At a supper party at Baynard's Castle, we are told, at which were present the Earl of Pembroke and his brother Montgomery, the Seymours, and other great nobles, they solemnly considered whether this young man Villiers who had taken the King's fancy should be supported as a rival candidate. The guests on separating and passing from one of the great houses in the Strand through Fleet Street (they must have looked on one house still existing, once the palace of Prince Henry, the eldest son of James, and now a barber's shop), happened to notice a painter's stall where a picture of Somerset was put up for sale. One of them, as a sign of scorn for that Earl against whom they were plotting, ordered his servant to throw some mud on his face. The order was obeyed promptly—to some men it is a merry thing to cast mud—but the story does not tell us whether the painter or the dealer was paid. Probably not, we may imagine.

Insult was answered by insult. The news that a new favourite was at hand could not be long kept from the ears of the man most concerned and from those who would go down with him if he fell. "This was quickly discovered," says Sir Henry Wotton, "by him who was then, as yet, in some possession of the King's heart. For there is nothing more vigilant,

nothing more jealous than a Favourite, especially towards the Waning time and suspicions of Satiety."

Somerset had his servants. One of them, perhaps after hearing of the mud slung at his master's portrait, took a more effective revenge. As Villiers sat at the Royal table the fellow with evident insolence spilt a dish of soup over the Court dress of the young gallant.

We get our first glimpse of the spirit of George Villiers. He was always quick-tempered, and never thought twice when an insult was offered him. He sprang up and clouted the man over the ear. It was not a prudent act. By that blow struck in the presence of the King's Majesty George Villiers had, by law, forfeited his own right hand. And Somerset, as Lord Chamberlain, had his enemy in his grip, for by his office he was (according to the statute 33 Henry VIII. c. 12) called upon "to be ready at the place and time of execution as shall be appointed, as is aforesaid, to sear the stump when the hand is stricken off." There is something Gilbertian in the idea, looking back on it. But then it was grim enough. Somerset must have licked his lips when he saw, or heard of, his rival's treasonable offence. Like Shylock, he would demand the flesh. But James ruled otherwise, and upheld the justice of the blow, though it had passed in his presence, and gave signal proof of his affection for the younger man.

Villiers, men said, and whispered it about, had obtained "a clear conquest" over the Scot.

There were other ways of ridding one of a rival. In Alsatia there was many a Captain Colepepper ready, at a price, to steal after any gallant in the dark and, between one end of an alley and the other, to stick a poniard in his back. Somerset was rich enough to pay for such service, and one Kerr, an illegitimate kinsman of the Lord Chamberlain, was, it is said, ready for the job. But he blabbed about it in his cups to some one at the Court, who carried the news to those who had put their money on the new man. The would-be assassin was hauled up to justice, and though he saved his neck by stubborn denial—perhaps, after all, the poor wretch was only guilty of Somerset's name—was committed to the King's dungeons.

So George Villiers did not get his footing at the Court without some peril. Probably he did not sleep the worse for it. His

upbringing had fitted him for a life of adventure, and young as he was, he was ready to face cold steel and swaggering cut-throats with a sense of gaiety and steady nerves, confident of his own quick wits and of his skill with rapier and poniard. It is chiefly to Sir Henry Wotton that we must look for the all too scanty details of Villiers's early life.

He came from Leicestershire, born at Brooksby, in that county, on the 28th of August, 1592, "where," says Sir Henry, "his ancestors had continued about the space of four hundred years, rather without obscurity than with any great lustre, after they had long been seated in Kinalton in the county of Nottingham." Says Clarendon, "A family of an ancient extraction, even from the time of the Conquest, and transported there with the Conqueror out of Normandy, where the family hath still remained and still continues with lustre."

He was the third son of Sir George Villiers, Knight, by Mary Beaumont, a second wife. Court tittle-tattlers and historical scavengers made out afterwards, when Villiers was the great and powerful Buckingham, that he was of mean birth, and that his mother was a serving-woman. Roger Coke was told by his aunt, who was connected by marriage with the Villiers family, that she was a kitchen-maid in old Sir George Villiers's establishment, and that, becoming enamoured of her pretty face, he persuaded his lady to place her about her person as a waiting-maid. Then, after the death of his wife, he gave Mary Beaumont twenty pounds to improve her dress, and found her so fine in it that he made her his own by a speedy marriage.*

Arthur Wilson gives a somewhat different tale, which is probably closer to the truth. "The old knight," says he, "was visiting his kinswoman, Lady Beaumont, at Colehorton in Leicestershire, and found there a young gentlewoman of that name, allied, and yet a servant of the family," who seemed to him a worthy creature to succeed to the place of his first lady, wherefore he married her.

By his first wife Sir George had had three sons and "some daughters," who shared an ample inheritance from him. By his second wife, Mary Beaumont, he had John, Christopher, and George, and a daughter, Susan. The old knight died in 1606, behaving rather scurvily, it seems, to his second wife and

* Coke's "Detection of the Court of England."

family, leaving the widow with only two hundred a year. But she was a business woman, and wanting to do well by her offspring, married twice again, first with Sir William Rayner, of whom history is silent, and second with Sir Thomas Compton, who, according to Roger Coke, was a rich farmer, and made up the wife's deficiency of fortune.

This Thomas Compton seems to have been a kind of Toby Belch, a man who found his good pleasure in pots of sack and clouds of Virginian tobacco, and of a somewhat timorous disposition, though swaggering in his cups. We see something of him later when Lady Compton was the Countess of Buckingham, in her own right, and when his stepson was the finest gentleman in the kingdom. This country knight, with his rustic speech and manners, was singularly out of place in the Court. In a letter from the Countess to her great son, when he was away on the Spanish journey, she tells how Sir Thomas presented himself to the King, but was "so strange in his head," owing, she thought, to wine and tobacco, that he had to be sent home under care. Wilson tells a merry anecdote of him which is characteristic of the man and his time. At his home in Leicestershire there was a neighbour named Bird, a roaring captain, and one of those swaggering, swashbuckling rascals whom Shakespeare knew to the marrow-bones. This Pistol was the plague of the rustic knight, and over strong sack said poor things of the squire's courage, taunting him for his mean spirit, and bragging of his own valour and skill with the sword-hand. Sir Thomas suffered this until for very shame he was bound to justify his knighthood. Perhaps his stepsons, John and Christopher and George, egged the old man on to take revenge of his tormentor. Be that as it may, the story tells that Sir Thomas's friends so wrought on his peaceful nature (putting to him that death was to be preferred to such persecution) that he was prevailed on to send Bird a challenge. The bully thought he had all his own way, and having the choice of place and weapons, as well as a braggart sense of humour, chose swords and a saw-pit, explaining that his selection was made to prevent Sir Thomas running away. In the saw-pit, accordingly, the duel took place. Bird, hugely merry with himself, brandished his sword and jeered at the little knight, who was quaking in his shoes, not being by nature valorous. But he

saw his chance to escape a hasty death, and perceiving his enemy's weapon in the air, ran under it, and passing his blade through the bully's body, killed him on the spot. There is some comedy in the scene, although it ends with death.

This, then, was George's early environment—a country life, with a rustic-mannered stepfather, a lady mother, brothers and half-brothers to play and quarrel with, country sports and pleasures to give him health and a sturdy spirit.

"He was nurtured," writes Sir Henry Wotton, afterwards his good friend and faithful servant, "where he had been born, in his first rudiments till the years of ten, and from thence sent to Billisden school in the same county, where he was taught the principles of musick and other elegant literature, till the thirteenth of his age, when his father died. Then his beautiful and provident mother, for those attributes will not be denied her, took him home to her house at Goodby, where she had him in special care, so as he was first, as we may say, domestick favourite. . . . But finding him, as it should seem, by Nature, little studious and contemplative, she chose rather to endue him with conservative qualities and ornaments of youth, as dancing, fencing, and the like, not without perchance, even then, though far off, as a courtier's life, in which lessons he had then such a dexterous proclivity as his teachers were fain to restrain his forwardness, to the end that his brothers, who were under the same training, might hold pace with him."

These last sentences of the poet-ambassador were no doubt rather flattering to the truth. But it is certain that though Villiers was, on his own confession and by all accounts, and especially by the evidence of his numerous and illiterate letters, no scholar, he had a good leg, and, as Bishop Goodman said, "a well-compacted body." Clarendon, witnessing also to the "singular care and affection of his mother," says that he was by her sent into France, "where he spent two or three years in attaining the language, and in learning the exercises of riding and dancing; in the last of which he excelled most men, and returned into England by the time he was twenty-one years old."

It would be interesting to know something of the adventures of George Villiers during this first visit to France. But guess-work is all we may have. He was probably in Paris when Henri IV. was assassinated by Ravallac, and when the people

in their fury exacted the most horrible course of torture that has perhaps ever been inflicted on quivering human flesh. He was certainly there when the boy-king Louis XIII. sat meekly on his throne under the eyes of his great mother Marie de Medici, and was betrothed to the daughter of Spain, Anne of Austria, who in later years was to endanger her reputation as a queen and a woman with that first Duke of Buckingham, who was now plain George Villiers, though a handsome boy, in Paris. There were many adventures to be had under the gables of old Paris, adventures of love and gallantry, duelling and ambuscades, political plots, and secret intrigues. Our imagination needs no kindling if we have read "The Three Musketeers," that immortal romance, which is not a text-book of history, but gives one a closer knowledge of the spirit of this period than all the text-books. Young Villiers must have met many a D'Artagnan in the wine-shops under the shadow of Notre Dame. He must have watched the swaggering musketeers as they waited to escort the carriage of Madam Mother from the palace of the Louvre. Perhaps being young, and George Villiers, he may have drunk the wine of enchantment with Miladi, the woman with the brand of the Fleur-de-lys, and some others.

Then at the witching age of twenty-one he came home again, not too Frenchified, we learn, but "in his natural Plight, without affected Forms, the ordinary disease of Travellers."* He was, in modern slang, at a loose end, haunting races, a shabby-genteel young gentleman, wondering by what means he could gain advancement and employment. Then, as we have seen, his shining face caught the King's eyes, and in a little while he was plunged into the vortex of Court intrigues.

The Court of James had not that glory and great glamour which belonged to the Court of Elizabeth. At Elizabeth's death, and even before, the sun had lowered its rays which had shone with such splendour over England. We are, of course, apt to look back upon the reign of Elizabeth through a soul of poetic haze. We forget there were many black hearts among those who ruled England or plundered the people. We forget—some of us—that the rack and the Smithfield fires claimed many victims; that beneath the glitter of the Court there was much that was mean and cruel and squalid, and even vulgar.

* Wotton.

But, in spite of that, England had awakened to a new youthfulness, lusty, and full of fresh enthusiasm, in the earlier years of the Queen. The influence of the Renaissance, that pouring in of new ideas and of a new sense of beauty, still put a spell over the intellect of the English gentle classes and roused them from sluggish ignorance. The revealing of the New World, the voyages of English seamen, and their homecoming with strange eventful tales of far lands and mysterious seas, quickened the imagination of the English people from the noble to the peasant classes, and gave them dreams of illimitable wealth, and the promise at least of good adventure for the blood. The spirit of English seamanship, long dormant, had awakened with the Drakes, and Frobishers, and Gilberts, and Grenvils, and Careys, and many more families of the West. Elizabeth with all her frailties had some sense of patriotism, and at her Council Board there were men of dignity and worth, and to her Court came men who were not merely courtiers—Sidney and Spenser and Sackville, those noble poets; the petulant but dare-devil Essex; Raleigh, in whose brain was born the dream of Empire, and who ventured his fortune and his life on it. Drayton, Marlowe, and Shakespeare, gave a golden age to English drama. The great peril with Spain threatening the Crown and liberty of the nation, called forth all its national spirit and hardihood, and the great victory over the Armada, with the piratical exploits of Francis Drake, was an English Iliad. The Court of Elizabeth was the centre and fountain-head of a new chivalry and splendour of English life, lifting up the people with a great sense of patriotism and pride. In the waning years of the great Queen, and with the coming of the Stuart James, the freshness and national enthusiasm of the kingdom declined. High hopes and great dreams were dashed. Raleigh's vision of Empire had been fulfilled only by repeated failure, and his outposts in the New World had been massacred by Indians, or driven home by the hardships of nature and fierce quarrellings among themselves, bringing back none of that great wealth which had been promised; and Raleigh himself, one of the few great Englishmen left out of a noble band, gnawed his heart out in the Tower prison, a living symbol of frustrated hope. The new King, who had been welcomed with waiting expectations by Puritans, who believed that his Calvinistic upbringing would

give them liberty of faith, and by the Catholics, who believed that their allegiance and service to his mother, Mary, would be repaid by Royal favour, disappointed both parties in the State. Though he took some of the great Catholic nobles into his service, thereby offending the Puritans, he enforced the penal laws against their worship with utmost severity. And to the Puritans he showed nothing but ill will, protesting that both he and his mother had been plagued with Calvin devils since their birth. He demanded conformity to the State-made Church, of which he was sovereign pontiff, thereby causing a great uneasiness and rebellious spirit in a nation of nonconformists. His reign began with the making and discovery and punishment of plots—the Main, the Rye, and the Gunpowder—and there were fires and scaffolds in Smithfield. The Court no longer stood as the mirror and glory of the national life. The King was a foreigner, and hedged himself round with strangers of uncouth tongues and insatiable greed. London was infested with swarms of Scotsmen, who followed the Stuart like locusts, elbowing out Englishmen, who believed they had higher claims to favour and plunder. “The truth is,” says Bishop Goodman, with the venom reflecting the hatred of the English people for a nation with which they had been at war for centuries, “that the wonderful waste at Court did draw on a number of Hang-bies, whole families of poor people, especially Scots. This made the Courtiers in fear of infectious and dangerous diseases. They were nasty for want of clean linen. There was much stealing, filching and robbery, and it was not safe for men to walk in the night.”

The King himself was guilty of the worst crimes (so many thought) possible to an English monarch. With his theory of “the Divine Right of Kings,” he ignored the principles of liberty gained through centuries of strife by Parliament and people; and, what was horribly worse, he was believed to be a coward, and known to be ridiculous. His ungainly figure, with weak knees, his stuttering Scots speech, his nervousness at the sight of cold steel, his lolling, slobbering manners with the handsome rakes whom he chose as his favourites, his pedantry and pedagogical jargon, robbed him of that respect which Englishmen expected to be able to give to their sovereign lord. It was no wonder that there were murmurings and gloomy prophecies,

and that to many Puritan citizens, and even to old English families of Protestant and Catholic faith who remembered the great days of Elizabeth, it seemed that a dry-rot had taken possession of the nation, and that England was going to its downfall. Francis Osborne, Pembroke's man, has recorded with bitter eloquence the degradation of the time and the oppression of his Court.

"Now by this time," he says, "the nation grew feeble and over-oppress'd with impositions, monopolies, aydes, privy-seales, concealments, pretermitted customes, etc., besides all forfeitures upon penal statutes, with a multitude of tricks more to cheat the English subject (the most, if not all, unheard of in Queene Elizabeth's dayes), which was spent upon the Scots: By whom nothing was unasked, and to whom nothing was denied; who for want of honester traffique did extract gold out of the faults of the English, whose pardons they beg'd and sold at intolerable rates, murder itself not being exempted. Nay I dare boldly say one man might with more safety have killed another than a raskall-deare; but if a stagge had been known to have miscarried and the authour fled, a proclamation with a description of the party had been presently penned by the attorney-general, and the penalty of his majestie's high displeasure (by which was understoode the Star-chamber) threatened against all that did abet, comfort, or relieve him."

Yet there was some exaggeration in all this. It is true that among the new men in high places there were many of little virtue, and that the Council Board of the King had not the dignity of Elizabeth's ministry; and it is true also that the chivalry and poetry of the Elizabethan age were passing. But looking round upon the figures of those who surrounded the King when Villiers came to Court and took the highest place among them within a little while, it must be acknowledged that there were some great characters who, having added to the splendour of Elizabeth's reign, still gave some glory to that of James. Shakespeare was still living quietly at Stratford-on-Avon, with only occasional visits to London, and his great dramas were not forgotten or neglected. Ben Jonson was in the full lustre of his genius, and his masques were written for "the rood pleasure and glory of James." Poetry was not extinguished, and Sir Henry Wotton, Villiers's friend and our

ambassador at Venice, was only one of many high minds who continued the traditions of English poetry bequeathed by that little cluster of singers round the Virgin Queen.

When Villiers came to Court, Francis Bacon was Attorney-General, and though his high intellect stooped to the servility of the courtier, and was used for the intrigues of ambition, not nobly (as in Elizabeth's reign he had exalted and debased himself by the zeal with which he prosecuted his friend and patron Essex), yet this greatest of English philosophers, who took all knowledge for his province, and opened up new fields and new worlds of truth, gave by his genius a glory to the Court of James, in which were so many petty men. As we shall see later, he was quick to secure the favour of George Villiers, and owed advancement to that man who in intellect was not worthy to lace his shoes, yet whose moral character, in spite of many weaknesses, had a nobler quality of courage and honesty than that of the author of "The Advancement of Learning."

Among the nobler men with whom George Villiers found himself at Court was one who will always shine in history—that William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, who is believed by many (though not with real evidence) to have been the great patron of Shakespeare, and the "W. H." of Shakespeare's sonnets. The head of the noble family of Herbert, who gave many illustrious men and women to England, he was, in the reign of James, the worthiest representative of the English nobility. He was the son of that beautiful mother and witty gracious woman immortalized in Ben Jonson's epitaph on her tomb—if it is Ben Jonson's—

" Sidney's sister, Pembroke's mother,
Time, ere thou hast slain another
Wise and fair and good as she,
Death shall throw a dart at thee."

Philip, the poet, dedicated his "Arcadia" to this sister, who best loved him and understood him most; and as a patroness of men of learning, she lived a full and gracious life, dying in an advanced age at her home in Aldersgate Street in 1621, seven years after Villiers came to Court. William, Earl of Pembroke, her son, inherited some of her noble qualities, though he was not exempt from one vice of his age, and loved women not wisely but too well. "In person," says Anthony Wood, "he

was rather majestic than elegant, and his presence, whether quiet or in motion, was full of stately gravity." In character he was of a large generous soul, loving poetry and pictures, and the elegance of life, becoming a patron like his mother to men of wit and good taste and genius. Though he took his place at the Court and the Council Board, he stood above and aloof from the crowd of Court panderers and flatterers. Though Elizabeth was charmed by him, in his youthfulness he had shocked his friends by the coldness and carelessness with which he received her favours; and when the Stuart came to the throne, he gave him his loyalty and service, but retained his own self-respect and noble independence. Believing still in the ideals of the last reign, he had no love for the drawing near to Spain which was the new policy; and when King James discussed the Spanish match between his heir, then Prince Henry, who still lived, and the Infanta, Pembroke, as we learn from Wood, opposed it with such violence that James shrank back with actual terror. But, to give James his due, he knew a man of honour, and respected truth, though he had a weakness for flatterers. As Clarendon says, he rather esteemed Pembroke than loved him. Clarendon's portrait of this great gentleman is a noble cameo. He calls him the most universally loved and esteemed of any man of that age.

"Having a great office in the Court, he made the Court better esteemed, and more revered in the country. And as he had a great number of friends of the best men, so no man had ever the wickedness to avow himself to be his enemy. He was a man very well bred, and of excellent parts, and a graceful speaker upon any subject, having a good proportion of learning, and a ready wit to apply it and enlarge upon it; of a pleasant and facetious humour, and a disposition affable, generous, and magnificent. . . . As he spent and lived upon his own fortune, so he stood upon his own feet, without any other support than of his proper virtue and merit; and lived towards his favourites with that decency as would not suffer them to censure or reproach his master's judgment or election but as with men of his own rank. . . . He was a great lover of his country, and of that religion and justice, which he believed could only support it; and his friendships were only with men of those principles. And as his conversation was most with

men of the most pregnant parts and understanding, so towards any who needed support or encouragement, though unknown, if fairly recommended to him he was very liberal. And sure never man was planted in a Court that was fitter for that soil, or brought better qualities with him to purify that air."

It says something for the character and the early promise of young George Villiers that the Earl of Pembroke should have given him his approval and patronage at the outset.

It is curious, though not really unusual, to find such a contrast in character between two brothers as shown by William, Earl of Pembroke, and Philip, Earl of Montgomery. Montgomery, who was afterwards a close associate of George Villiers, had none of the noble refinement of his brother. All contemporary references show him to have been a loud-mouthed bully and braggart. He won the King's heart by his handsome presence, which, says Osborne, "kept him not long company," and by his hunting skill and love of horses and dogs. When James first came to the English throne Philip Herbert had the reputation of being the favourite, and although Robert Kerr ousted him, he never lost the King's favour, holding his place as Gentleman of the Bedchamber. From the time when at Elizabeth's Court he astonished all by his "forwardness," he swaggered and bullied among his fellows with extraordinary impudence. With the manners of a groom, and the language of the stable, he had an uncontrollable temper, even in his middle age. Winwood, the Secretary of State, told an anecdote of a quarrel between Montgomery and the Earl of Southampton at a tennis match when the rackets went flying about each other's ears. It was only the King's presence and influence that prevented bloodshed. In the next reign, when Charles made him Lord Chamberlain, he broke his staff of office over the shoulders of a peer who had accidentally pushed him during a masque at the banqueting-house at Whitehall, and if it had not been for the Earl's office, and the place they were in, "it might have been a question," says Anthony Wood, whether "the Earl would ever have struck again."

Like most bullies, Montgomery was at heart a coward. Osborne tells a story, corroborated by others, of a scene on a racecourse at Croydon, where there was a great crowd of English and Scots. Montgomery, affronting the Scots, Ramsey,

one of them, switched him on the face. "But Herbert" (not then Earl of Montgomery) "not offering to strike again, nothing was spoilt but the reputation of a gentleman."

His marriage with Lady Susan Vere, daughter of the Earl of Oxford, was celebrated with great splendour at Whitehall in 1604. In a letter from Sir Dudley Carleton to Secretary Winwood, we learn that "the bride and bride-groom were lodged in the Council Chambers, where the King in his shirt and night-gown gave them a *reveille matin* before they were up. No ceremony was omitted of bride-cakes, points, garters, and gloves, which have been ever since the livery of the Court; and at night there was sewing into the sheet, casting off the bride's left hose, and many other pretty sorceries." We shall meet Montgomery later, on Buckingham's business, and learn more of a bully courtier who, owing his title to King's favours, abandoned his master in the hour of peril. Among other things about him, we learn from Bishop Goodman that he was supplied with money by his nobler brother.

There were other Herberts who were outstanding figures of the time. Edward, Lord Herbert of Cherbury, that Don Quixote of the Stuart reign, a chivalrous, valorous, and scholarly gentleman, whose sword was rather too soon out of its sheath when his temper was roused, which was often, but who fought according to the rules of the game and always with a nice sense of honour, and according to his old-fashioned ideals of knighthood. He would risk his life a dozen times to defend a damsel's ribbon worn as a love-knot, or to prove some point of punctilio, or to avenge some slight upon a lady's honour, or upon his nation or king, or upon his own courage, which was really undoubted. He was a Welshman of the temper of Shakespeare's Fluelylyn, rash and choleric, and very "prave." His autobiography, full of brag and quaint conceits, yet written, as he professes, "with all truth and sincerity," is good to read, and gives an admirable insight into the character, not only of the man himself, but of his time. By his adventures, duels, and enterprises in the Low Countries, by his cordial reception from Henri IV. of France, and from his Queen, who placed him publicly next to her chair, "not without the wonder of some and the envy of another who was wont to have that favour," and by the extraordinary and fierce duel with Sir John Ayres

in Whitehall, when with a broken sword he "wounded him in four places, and did almost cut off his left hand," made the Lord Herbert of Cherbury of great fame in England and France. When he came to Court it was whispered, indeed, that James's Queen was wonderfully taken with the little Welshman, and this was not without danger both to the Queen and the knight in a Court where there were so many tongues to wag scandal. He was one of those whom George Villiers favoured when he became my Lord of Buckingham, and we shall see more of the doughty gentleman.

Among his many brothers and sisters there was George Herbert—sweet and pious poet, whose verses still comfort many quiet minds with their beautiful conceits and exquisitely child-like reverence.

"He was so excellent a scholar," wrote his brother, "that he was made the public orator of the University in Cambridge, some of whose English works are extant, which, though they are rare in their kind, yet are far short of expressing those perfections he had in the Greek and Latin tongue, and all Divine and human literature. His life was most holy and exemplary, in so much that about Salisbury, where he lived beneficed for so many years, he was little less than sainted."

Henry Herbert, another brother, was a man of distinction. Educated in France, he spoke the language perfectly; and, then, coming to the English Court, was made Gentleman of the King's Privy Chamber, and Master of the Revels, claiming jurisdiction over all entertainments and the licensing of books. "By which means," says Lord Herbert, "and also by a good marriage he attained to great fortune for himself and posterity to enjoy. He hath also given several proofs of his courage in duels and otherwise, being no less dexterous in the ways of the Court, as having gotten much by it."

Though the family of the Herberts favoured, and were afterwards favoured by, George Villiers, it was a cousin of the Lord of Cherbury, Sir Edward Herbert, Judge of the High Court, who afterwards managed the impeachment of Buckingham in 1626.

The most learned nobleman at the Court of James was the Catholic Henry Howard, first Earl of Northampton, son of the poet Earl of Surrey who introduced the jewel of great

price to English rhymers, the sonnet of Italy. Northampton, who had corresponded with James when he only had the Scottish throne, advised him to be tolerant to the Catholics if he wished their support in England. But though his faith was ardent, he never allied himself with conspirators when James disappointed Catholic hopes, and he was one of the commissioners in the trial of Guy Fawkes. He was made Lord Privy Seal in 1608, and at Northumberland House on the Strand, which he built magnificently, he reigned as the leader of the Catholic nobility and party. When Somerset became his kinsman through marriage, he became his close friend, and used him as a tool in intriguing with Spain. It was Northampton's letters to him which were afterwards destroyed by the favourite when his enemies got their grip upon him. But the great nobles of the two kingdoms, apart from those raised by his own favour, were not most close to the person of the King when Villiers came to Court and joined them. James, spite of his real scholarship and his public assumption of majesty, loved the easy familiarity of boon companions, men of gallant looks and youth, who amused him with frolic tricks, and boisterous horse-play, among whom he could forget the cares of State, the malice of political enemies, and the troublesome dignity of kingship. With them he was more an amiable and easy-going schoolmaster among a crowd of larking boys than a sovereign among subjects, and he loved to lavish gifts on them, to see them bravely dressed, to listen to their quarrellings and naughtiness, to reprove them paternally, and to laugh at their impudence.

"From my memory," wrote Osborne, inveighing against this crowd of courtiers and the wealth poured into their purses by the King, "are the Lords Roxborrow, Fenton, Carlile, and Dunbar, that during the reign of the King lay sucking at the breasts of the State, nor were some of them weaned long after his death."

The first of those mentioned was Robert Ker, first Earl of Roxburghe, a Scotsman who had been of good service to James before he succeeded to the English crown, and then came with him to London to enjoy the southern sunshine of majesty. He was loyal to the son as well as to the father, and is remembered on the Royalist side as being the man who held open the door

of the House of Commons when Charles attempted to arrest the five members. The Fenton put on the black list by Osborne was Thomas Erskine, created Viscount Fenton in 1606, and afterwards Earl of Kelly. He had been educated with the King and was his Gentleman of the Bedchamber in Scotland. He was not loved more by the English people, who hated him as a Scot, because he succeeded Sir Walter Raleigh as Captain of the Guard.

Sir George Hume, Earl of Dunbar, in this company, was generally acknowledged even by his enemies to be a man of intelligence, ability, and honour. He was Lord High Treasurer in Scotland, and held other high posts. But he does not enter this story, except by this mention in Osborne's memoirs, as he died three years before the advent of George Villiers.

The fourth man named by Osborne as "Carlile" was James Hay, afterwards Earl of Carlisle, and a close companion of Buckingham's. He was a man not unlike George Villiers himself, though, it seems, of a lighter temperament, and a butterfly fellow like some Rosencrantz of the English Court. He was one of the King's handsome young men, and his gorgeous dress and prodigal extravagance of hospitality made him notorious.

Francis Osborne, who as Master of the Horse to the Earl of Pembroke, and a popular author of the period, must have often gone to Carlisle's town house, has left on record that the young nobleman "was the first to bring in the vanity of ante-suppers, not heard of in our forefather's time, and for ought I have read, or at least remembered, unpractised by the most luxurious tyrants. The manner of which was to have the board covered, at the first entrance of the guests, with dishes as high as a tall man could well reach, filled with the choicest and dearest viands sea and land could afford. And all this once seen, and having feasted the eyes of the invited was in a manner thrown away, and fresh set on to the same height, only hot." Even our modern millionaires of the West, in all their mad endeavours for extravagant luxury, have hardly equalled the fantastic waste of this Scottish peer.

He was not yet Earl of Carlisle when Villiers first became his friend, but as Baron Hay and Master of the Wardrobe, he stood high in the affection of James. In 1617 he married Lucy Percy, daughter of that "stout Earl of Northumberland" who

was imprisoned for his connection with the Gunpowder Plot. She was a beauty and a wit, and the poets of the time laid their verses at her feet, made sonnets to her eyebrows, and praised her charms with graceful flattery. She and her husband made a very handsome couple, and were, as we should say now, Society leaders in London. It is curious that the lady who was the beauty of two Courts, the favourite and confidante of two queens, and the Belle Dame Sans Merci of the Royalist poets Davenant, Carew,¹ Herrick, Suckling, and Waller, should have become the intimate friend of Pym the Puritan, revealing to him the intended arrest of the five members, and that in the Civil Wars she was the Madame Roland of the Presbyterian republicans.

There was another courtier close to the heart of James, and a boon companion of James Hay. He, too, like Hay's wife, was treacherous to those who had richly favoured him; and becoming turncoat twice, he lost his head before he had time to turn again. This was Sir Henry Rich, afterwards made Baron Kensington and first Earl of Holland. In his youth, when, with George Villiers and James Hay, he made one of a handsome triumvirate of favourites, he was a gay and gallant prodigal, not cautious even in the game of being courtier. The King, taken by his bonny face, would deny him nothing, but Rich lost that opportunity, says Osborne, Pembroke's Master of Horse, "which his curious face and complexion afforded him, by turning aside and spitting after the King had slabered his mouth."

The wantonness of this man was in his blood, and bequeathed by a wanton mother. Penelope Rich was sister of Elizabeth's Earl of Essex, and wife of Robert, Earl of Warwick. But before she became a wife, as a girl of fourteen, she won the passionate affections of Philip Sidney, and after her marriage, which she hated, she encouraged the poet, who praised her charms, and inflamed his passion in those sonnets which were collected afterwards under the name of "Astrophel and Stella." When Sidney died at Zutphen, refusing the famous cup of water, Penelope became mistress of the Lord Mountjoy, afterwards Earl of Devonshire, and married him when Warwick divorced her. She was one of those frail beauties bred in the evil of a Court, leading men to ruin of heart and soul. Fortunately she

does not concern us here except as the mother of Villiers's friend.

There were other gentlemen about the King whom we shall meet again as the comrades of George Villiers or as his rivals at the Court—Digby, Earl of Bristol, and Sir Kenelm, his kinsman; Richard, Earl of Dorset, "a noble gentleman of good parts," says Osborne, "had they not been poisoned, together with his owner, by a future malice and jealousy, in the Duke of Buckingham that he was his enemy;" Sir Edward Zouche, Sir George Goring, and Sir John Finnett, "the chief and master-fools" of the Court; Sir John Millisent (not without high claims to fine foolery), Sir John Harrington, and Sir John Peyton. These, then, were the King's friends, and those who had hold of his purse-strings.

But above them, as their master and lord paramount, was the man Robert Carr, Earl of Somerset, who must now come in as the predecessor of George Villiers in the office of King's favourite.

He was a cadet of the Carrs (or Ker, as it is spelt in Scotland) of Ferniehurst, a family who had been loyal to the service of Marie Stuart, the King's mother. As a boy he had been a page in the Scottish Court of James, but it was after travels in France that he came to England and attracted the King's eyes, and then by an accident, which caused his fortune. At a tilting match before the King he was the equerry of Lord Hay, but his horse curvetting, he fell and broke his leg. He was carried swooning to a neighbouring apartment, and James, who, whatever his faults, had a kind heart, came in person to the bedside of the sufferer to make inquiries. He was struck with much tenderness for young Carr, and after repeated visits during his convalescence, took him into his household, and treated him with fatherly affection. "The Prince," it was observed,* "leaneth on his arm, pinches his cheek, smoothes his ruffled garments. The young man doth much study art and device: he hath changed his tailors and tiremen many times, and all to please the Prince. The King teacheth him Latin every morning, and I think some one should teach him English too; for he is a Scotch lad, and hath much need of better language."

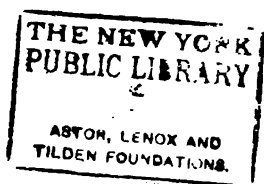
But James liked this bonny lad none the less because he

* "*Nugæ Antiquæ*."



ROBERT CARR, EARL OF SOMERSET

FROM THE PAINTING ATTRIBUTED TO JOHN HOSKINS IN THE NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY



spoke with the Scots burr. Those who knew him then describe him as "straight-limbed, well-favoured, strong-shouldered, and smoothfaced." Wilson describes him at a later age as "rather well compacted than tall; his features and favour comely and handsome rather than beautiful; the hair of his head flaxen, that of his face tinctured with yellow of the Sycambrian colour."

In 1607 the King gave him the accolade as knight, and two years later the Manor of Sherborne, which had belonged to Walter Raleigh, who, from his prison in the Tower, wrote to Carr, imploring him not to bring his poor wife to penury. In 1611 he was created Viscount Rochester, and the year following became private secretary to the King, having in his hands as first favourite the patronage of the offices of State, which had fallen vacant with Salisbury's death, and were to be filled by Royal favour. In their hearts, Suffolk, Northampton, the Howards, Herberts, Russells, and other great nobles hated the young upstart, yet they stooped to solicit his favour for themselves and their kinsmen.

But Rochester, or Somerset, as he became later, and by which title he is now known, had, as some other men in high places, a ghost who prompted him. This was Thomas Overbury, Bachelor of Arts, of Queen's College, Oxford, and barrister of the Middle Temple, a man of ability in intrigue (having few principles) and a poet and writer of contemporary popularity. Twenty writers, including Ford, gave prefatory verses to his poem, "The Wife," which is still read with pleasure by students of literature, and Ben Jonson (who afterwards broke with him for an attempted intrigue with Lady Rutland, the future mother-in-law of George Villiers) wrote high praise of his elegant taste. Overbury, rising with his friend, whom he had met in Edinburgh, was knighted by the King and made his server (an honourable post); but James never had any affection for him, and the Queen hated him. There is a story told (and well authenticated) of how she committed him to the Tower for a laugh. It does not seem a heinous offence, but Thomas Overbury happened to laugh under her window, as he vowed, at an innocent joke of his companion, and the Queen considered it an insult to her person, which shows that though a cat may laugh at a king, a courtier must not laugh at a queen. Through Carr's influence he was released, and, as private secretary to the private secretary,

conducted the sales of patronage by which the favourite grew rich, and coached his master through the tortuous paths of his high and dangerous position.

He did other things. He wrote love-letters for the Scotsman, who, in spite of the King's lessons, was probably not good at penmanship. And this letter-writing led to the death of the scrivener and to the ruin of the man and woman between whom they passed.

They were written, unfortunately, to the Lady Essex, the young, beautiful, and wanton wife of the Elizabethan favourite's son and successor. She was Frances Howard, daughter of the Duke of Suffolk, Lord Chamberlain. As a child of thirteen she was married to Robert Devereux, third Earl of Essex, who was one year older. This boy-and-girl marriage was nothing but a ceremony, and immediately after the wedding the two were separated, the bridegroom to go to the University and afterwards to the Continent, the girl-bride to her mother's house. It is no wonder that when the boy returned as a man she did not recognize him lovingly as a husband, but hated him as a stranger who was bound to her by a ceremony which in her case had been an outrageous mockery. While he had been abroad she had grown in mind and beauty, and at her father's great house in London had attracted the eyes of men who would dare many things for her wit and loveliness. The King's son and heir, Prince Henry, that noble young man, as he seems to have been, who commiserated and comforted Raleigh in his prison, declaring openly that no one but his father would keep such a bird in such a cage, and who was so well loved by the people that the King was jealous of being outshone, came often from his mansion in the Strand (still standing as a relic of the time), or from the palace of St. James's, to the house of the young beauty, and was dazzled by her.

It is impossible to know how much we should believe of contemporary gossip on this affair. There are always men about a Court ready to calculate the exact meaning of a message between two pairs of eyes, to twist a chance phrase into a dark secret, and to elaborate an intrigue out of an innocent jest. But it does seem that Prince Henry was hot upon the trail of the Lady Essex, and that she was inclined to tease him on. "The Prince of Wales, now in his puberty," says

Wilson, "sent many loving glances as ambassadors of his good respects." Sir Symonds D'Ewes makes the plain statement that the Earl of Northampton, her uncle, incited her to win the Prince, and that he was the first to enjoy her favours. In the "*Aulicus Coquinariæ*," so strongly salted with scandal, we read that it was a notorious truth that the Prince, who otherwise was untouched by women, had a love for the Countess of Essex before any other lady living.

The lady herself, however, was soon in the meshes of another passion. Somerset, then Viscount Rochester, had set her heart on fire with his flaxen hair, and with his handsome face, "tinctured with yellow of the Sycambrian colour." That also was a notorious truth, and Prince Henry knew his rival. Osborne relates how one day he threatened to hit his father's favourite over the head with a racket, and Wilson has a story of a glove dropped by the lady, which was picked up and given to the Prince as a thing to please him. But he drew back his hand and would not touch it, saying that "he scorned it, since it had been stretched by another." Prince Henry died, though not of love, in 1612, and Robert Carr, Lord Rochester, had now only one rival between himself and the lady for whom, so mad was he in his guilty passion, he lost his honour, and risked all his fortune. That rival was the husband, the Earl of Essex, who, coming home to the wife with whom he had never lived, desired her company and affection. The one he got under compulsion, the other never. She made no secret of her repugnance to him, and when submitting to his appeals, and to her father's stern commands, she travelled with her lord to his great house in Essex, she sat all day long sulking and weeping in her own room. Whenever she came to town again, Somerset (as it is convenient to call him) succeeded in meeting her, and between them, on one of these visits, they arranged a scheme for making a way to their union. It was agreed that the Lady Essex should plead for a nullity of her marriage for reasons dishonouring to the manhood of the Earl.

Somerset sounded the King on the subject, and found him complaisant. It seemed to James that if a divorce could be made lawfully between the Earl and Countess of Essex, so that his favourite could marry this lady, Frances Howard, daughter of his Treasurer, the Duke of Suffolk, it would be good for the

peace of mind of majesty, and for the welfare of the Court and kingdom. There had been much jealousy against his favourite on the part of Suffolk and his kinsmen, distressful to the King, who wished his Court to be a happy family. But if Carr married the Essex woman she would give the favourite an alliance with the greatest family in the kingdom and stifle their hostility. The King's consent to the proceedings of divorce was gained, not only by Somerset's fair words, but by his gold. The master who had made him rich was at this time very needy, finding a proud parliament and a people (bled too much and too often by his tax-collectors and prodigal young men) unwilling to yield to his requests for loans and benevolences. "We being at a dead lift," says secretary Winwood, "and at our wits end for money, he [Somerset] sent for some officers of the receipt, and delivering them the key of the chest, bid them take what they found there for the King's use ; which they say was four or five and twenty thousand pounds in gold." This was the price to be paid for the beauty of a wanton wife.

"The Viscount Rochester, all this while," says Wilson, "(though plunged in Lust) was held up by the chin in the glories of the Court." But opposition came to Somerset from an unexpected quarter, from his closest friend and confidant. Thomas Overbury, though he had been the go-between in the beginning of the amour, was passionate against the scheme of divorce. "You wonne her by my letters," he wrote to Somerset, but he now denounced "the baseness of the woman," and the shame of marriage with her, vowing that he could and would put an insurmountable obstacle in the way of their union. It is not easy to guess the objections of a man whose sense of honour was not extraordinarily nice. Or is it possible that the healing of the feud between Somerset and his enemies would upset his own ambitions and intrigues? On the other hand, Overbury may have stuck at the idea of a divorce for a woman upon a legal reason which he knew to be as false as her own pretence of virtue.

Somerset was troubled, and being a fool with this woman, let her into the secret of Overbury's opposition. The Lady Essex was not one to smile at such enmity. D'Artagnan's "Miladi" in her revengeful and cruel nature was not more inherently vicious than this daughter of the Howards. To

one Sir Daniel Wood, a noted duellist, she offered a thousand pounds to rid her of the insolent Overbury. Sir Daniel, however, declared that "he had no objection to bastinado him, but that he was unwilling to be sent to Tyburn for any lady's pleasure." Overbury, it seems, did not keep his objections secret, but maligned, or rather, told the truth, about the lady to men about the Court. Beauty, however, has many champions, and Weldon says that "if one of her brothers or any of her kindred had killed him in fair combat, the world would readily have exonerated them."

But what seemed a safer way was found by Somerset and his friends to silence a dangerous voice. Overbury was offered, and then ordered upon, an embassy to France or Russia. It was a usual method of getting a highly placed man out of the country for a time. But Overbury, at bay, and with his temper up, protested that neither the King's Majesty nor any law could compel him to leave his native land. The answer was carried (and doubtless exaggerated in tone and phrasing) to James, who, in spite of his easy familiarity with favourites, upheld the Divine Right of Kings, and would not be flouted by one for whom he had no liking. Overbury's answer was construed as *lèse majesté*, and the knight was sent to cool his temper, and improve his manners, in the Tower.

Things were now hurried on. The Earl of Northampton, the uncle of the Countess, presented a petition to the King for the divorce of the Earl and his lady, and James directed that the case should be heard by the bishops and a Royal Commission. The details of the trial that now took place would doubtless be reported fully in modern newspapers that pander to the prurience of a low-class public. There is no need to stain these pages with it. It was a shameful affair, and the Earl of Essex would have been justified in scorning the bishops and peers who were willing to blind themselves to a notorious intrigue between his wife and Somerset, for the sake of flattering the wishes of the King and his favourite, were it not that he played into their hands, and suffered a public degradation of his manhood, in order to rid himself of an evil woman. We may believe Bishop Goodman when he declares himself confident that if the Countess had not instituted the proceedings, "the Earl of Essex would himself have been the plaintiff, so

then I hereby conclude that both parties were agreed, and were alike interested in the business." The King took a personal part in the trial, used his influence with the judges, and argued the psychology of the marriage relationship with curious pedantry and mediæval candour of speech. It was a foregone conclusion, and the marriage was formally annulled, though Abbot, the Archbishop of Canterbury, an honest and courageous man, held out against a decision which accorded virtue to an immoral woman. "To his everlasting fame," says Weldon, "he mainly opposed all the proceedings and protested against them, for which he ever after lived in disgrace, excluded from the Council Chamber, and dyed in the disgrace of the King on earth, though in favour with the King of Kings."

Sir Thomas Overbury did not hear of the verdict in favour of the Countess. The day before its announcement, and after an imprisonment of six months, during which time he had been refused all intercourse with the outside world, he died suddenly and mysteriously, and was buried hurriedly. Even then there were people who had been his friends, and others who were Somerset's enemies, who whispered dark things about his death. But it was some time before the secrets of the Tower were revealed with such detailed horror, that not even the gold or greatness of a conscience-tortured man could stifle and bury them.

On the day after Christmas Day in 1613, Frances Howard and Robert Carr were married at Whitehall, the King and Queen and all the great people of the Court attending the ceremony, which was as magnificent as any Royal wedding, and followed until Twelfth Night by a series of pageants, pomps, and masques. Those who had been, and were, in their hearts, Somerset's deadly enemies gave him fawning flattery, and smiled with white teeth at his beautiful bride. But in corners they whispered, and made comments on the hang-dog looks of the husband, and lifted eyebrows at the impudence of his lady wife, who appeared all in white, with hair hanging down, according to the marriage dress of a lily virgin. Some of them vowed they would drag this favourite down, and with him that woman clinging on his arm, but they must wait till the King lost his madness for the flaxen-haired Scot. Yet in spite of these whisperings, Whitehall, as Roger Coke says "was too narrow to contain the

triumphs of this marriage, and they must be extended to the city."

And Wilson, with more hyperbole, says, "The City of London and the Court at Whitehall like two great stars in conjunction had one and the same influence and operation, they must do something for the man whom the King loves : Therefore a great Feast is prepared by them in the Merchant Taylor's Hall (and all the Grandees and Ladies are invited) with so much magnificence as if it had been Competition, and vyed with Whitehall for Glory. They all rode on horseback into the City in the evening, following their two Leaders; the men attending the Bridegroom and the Women the Bride; so mounted, furnished and adorned with Trappings, and so bespangled with Jewels that the Torches and Flamebeaux, which were numerous, were but little light to the Beholders."

Robert Carr, made Earl of Somerset a month before his marriage, and Lord Treasurer of Scotland three days before, was now the most powerful man in the kingdom, though not the happiest (having dark secrets in his brain), and a complete ascendancy over the King's will. He attached himself closely to his wife's great-uncle, Henry Howard, the Earl of Northampton, and to the Spanish party of Catholics who favoured an alliance with those who had been our deadly enemies. When Northampton died in June of 1614, Somerset became acting Lord Privy Seal, and in July Lord Chamberlain, so that he could hardly go further in ambition. Indeed, he had reached that point in the arc of fate, after which there is a decline, and this was hastened by his own changing temperament and by outward hostile forces now constantly at work to undermine him. His early sweetness of manner had changed into a gloomy arrogance and sullen temper, which alienated courtiers and endangered him with the King. But it was his intriguing with the Spanish party and with that nation, which ranged against him such men as Pembroke and Seymour, and other English lords with whom hatred to Spain was still a tradition and the first principle of patriotism. It was in this position, then, of high power, but attacked by secret forces undermined, that the first favourite stood when young George Villiers came with the sunshine of his face to the Court of James.

CHAPTER II

THE DOWNFALL OF SOMERSET

IT was after the famous meeting of great nobles at Baynard's Castle that George Villiers entered the King's household, the office of Cup-bearer being purchased for him by Sir Thomas Lake. The King, fearing the jealousy of Somerset, did not raise the young man immediately by any formal title, though he was already high in his affections. "He had taken such a liking of his Person," writes Sir Henry Wotton, "that he resolved to make him a Master-piece and to mould him as it were Platonically to his own Idea. Neither was his Majesty content to be the architect of his Fortunes without putting his gracious hand to some Part of the Work itself: In so much as it pleased him to descend and to visit his Goodness, even to the giving of his aforesaid Friend Sir John Graham directions how and by what Degrees should bring him into Favour."

This "aforesaid friend," Sir John Graham, was a Gentleman of the Bedchamber, experienced in the temper of his master and in the ways of the Court, so that he was valuable as an adviser of a young man ignorant, as yet, of his perils and opportunities. He began the duties of his guardianship by holding back the young courtier from an imprudent marriage with love and poverty. It is characteristic of Villiers that he had hardly set foot in London before he was in the meshes of an amorous adventure. This was with the daughter of Sir Roger Ashton, Master of the Wardrobe, an old and trusty servant, who had long held the confidence and affection of the King without getting a great share of Royal plunder. Sir John Graham, a canny Scot, laughed at this calf-love between Villiers and his young lady, and used his powers of argument to prove the folly of an early marriage with a maid of no great family or wealth,

in the case of a man like Villiers who, having the King's grace, might hold himself in waiting for a much greater match. Villiers allowed himself to be persuaded. He gave up Mistress Ashton, not without some tugging at the heart-strings, though the pity is all on the side of the maid, who lost her handsome gallant. To the promoters of his fortune one thing was now necessary before he could be secure. He must gain the Queen's good grace. James, though it is suspected that he had no great love for his consort, Anne of Denmark, stood in a certain wholesome fear of her, and it was one of his principles never to take up a new favourite without first obtaining for him the Queen's support. It was, perhaps, one of those touches of pedantry belonging to his self-conceived philosophy of kingship. There was no reason why Villiers should be objectionable to the Queen. She agreed at least with his patrons in hating Somerset and desiring his downfall. Osborne declares plainly that "the Queen became head of a great faction against him."

So Villiers was introduced to her, and made his first bow to that plump, yellow-haired Danish woman who had not escaped the scandal of Sir Benjamin Backbite and others, who would tear a woman's reputation to tatters with "I could an' if I would." She was, no doubt, a woman without much serious purpose, and thought her life well spent in watching masques which, so slander said, were not always as decorous as they might be, even in an age of licence. She is said to have loved the Earl of Murray, who was stabbed to death in the face by the Earl of Huntly, to whom with his dying breath he said, "You have spoilt a better face than your own," for in the words of the old song—

"He was a braw gallant
And he played at the glove,
And the bonnie Earl of Murray
He was the Queen's love."

She is said also, God knows with what truth, to have loved the Earl of Gowrie's brother, who was also killed. The poor lady must have needed some other love than the ungainly King her husband, and her straying fancies may have been innocent enough. James left her much alone in private, though publicly he feigned the tenderest affection. Osborne has left a ludicrous little picture of a scene: when the King parted from her one

evening, "and to show himselfe more uxorious before the people at his first coming than in private he was, he did at her coach take his leave, by kissing her sufficiently to the middle of her shoulders, for so low she went bare all the dayes I had the fortune to know her, having a skinned far more amiable than the features it covered, though not her disposition in which report rendered her very debonaire."

Anne of Denmark did not take very kindly to George Villiers. When she was asked to favour his suit with the King, she answered that if he became a favourite he would prove more intolerable than any that had gone before him. And the Archbishop, Abbot, who was with her when she spoke these words, wrote afterwards: "Noble Queen, how like a prophetess you speak!"* Yet in his early days the Archbishop did not find Villiers intolerable, but was his powerful supporter and spiritual adviser. There is a letter from him to the young favourite, written when Villiers was first exalted, which is full of kindness—

"And now, my George, because of your kind affection towards me, you style me your father. I will from this day forward respect and esteem you for my son, and so hereafter know yourself to be. And in token thereof, I do now give you my blessing again, and charge you as my son, daily to serve God, to be diligent and pleasing to your master, and to be wary that, at no man's instance you press him with many suits; because they are not your friends that urge those things upon you, but have private ends of their own, which are not fit for you. So praying God to bless you, I rest

"Your very loving father,

"G. CANT.

"Lambeth, 10th Dec. 1615.

"To my very loving son, Sir George Villiers,
Knight and Gentleman of his Majesty's Bedchamber"*

It was on St. George's Day of 1615 that Villiers received the first of those titles which soon were to fall so thick on him. A scene as curious as any in romantic drama took place in the palace. Within his bedchamber James sat with the Queen and Prince Charles. Outside, by the Queen's arrangement, Villiers

* Goodman's "Memoirs."

waited for a call from her when she might find some occasion to summon him into the presence. With him on one side of the room were his patrons and friends, among them the Archbishop, and on the other stood Somerset with a gloomy face among a few of his followers, waiting also for an opportunity to enter the Royal bedchamber.* Both parties knew that there was something more at stake this evening than bedchamber compliments to the King. They knew that the Queen was using her influence to raise this young rival of the Earl's, and Somerset himself suspected that upon the issue depended his claim to be first favourite. One's imagination pictures that scene—the young Villiers smiling easily, and chatting with careless grace to the Archbishop and his friends, as though already assured of the honour now being asked for him ; these friends of his whispering or staring in tense silence at the King's door, waiting for some movement within ; while standing away from them was the flaxen Earl, the wreck of a former beauty on his face, silent and moody, turning his steel grey eyes for a moment upon the resplendent beauty of his young competitor. It was not a secret that the King was being asked to make Villiers a Gentleman of his Bedchamber, so that he would be constantly under the eyes of the King, and Somerset chafed at the first sign of his waning influence, for, until then, such a position had been in his own patronage. He dared to send in a message begging the King at least to be content with conferring on Villiers the inferior office of Groom of the Bedchamber ; but the Archbishop, overhearing this, sent words of his own to the Queen, pressing her to insist on the higher office. It was all a game of James's, as we may well believe, for he loved prearranged effects and carefully rehearsed surprises. We cannot doubt that he had resolved upon his favour to Villiers. That young man was at last called for, and when he was admitted, the Queen spoke to the Prince to draw his sword and give it her. Then she knelt before the King, "and humbly beseeched his Majesty to do her that special favour as to knight this noble gentleman whose name was George for the honour of St. George whose feast he now kept." The King blinked with his blue eyes at the cold steel as though afraid of it as usual. "He seemed," says Bishop Goodman, who tells this

* Goodman's "Memoirs."

story, "to be afeard that the Queen should come to him with a naked sword." But then with a joyful air he took the weapon and gave George Villiers that tap on the shoulder which raised him from the common rank. "And," says the Bishop, "it might very well be that it was his own contriving, for he did much please himself with such inventions."

Villiers received something more than knighthood, and that he might uphold his new honours with a necessary splendour (the King liking his gentlemen well dressed and attended), was given an annuity of a thousand pounds, settled on him out of the Court of Wards.

It was a blow to Somerset, whose temper was not of a yielding kind so that he could see himself take a second place in the King's confidence without resentment. It must not be thought, however, that the Earl was put down from his high place by a sudden turn of the King's fancy. He was still in power, not only by virtue of his office as Lord Chamberlain and Privy Seal, but also by the dominating influence of his strong will and arrogant spirit over the King's weaker nature. James was easily overawed by a man of his character and it was also difficult for one of his real amiability and sincerity of affection to break with a man whom he had loved and looked to for some years as his closest counsellor and most intimate and trusted friend. Somerset, if he had played the game cleverly, might easily have held his place, and kept Villiers in a subordinate position among the King's gentlemen. But he was his own worst enemy, and by presuming insolently upon his influence with the King, and by the petulance and arrogance of his protests and demands, aroused the Stuart spirit of obstinacy which was at the bottom of the King's nature, in spite of all his weakness. Although Somerset stood almost alone, having alienated the affections of all but the family of the Howards, he behaved as though the King were a mere weakling and plaything in his hands. He broke in upon the privacy of the King's majesty at unreasonable hours with complaints of the factious conduct of his enemies, and displayed violent jealousy against the young knight Villiers, until at last James was stirred to give him a severe and well-merited rebuke. In Howell's collection of letters of the Kings of England there is a remarkable copy of a letter from James to his ill-tempered Earl. As

for the factions, he wrote, he knew little of them, and he certainly should refuse to give heed to any accusations against him proceeding from such a quarter. He had done all that was in his power to prove that his confidence was undiminished. He had made Sir John Graham, who had incurred Somerset's ill-will, feel his displeasure, admitting Somerset's nephew to the vacant place which the Earl had demanded of him, though even the Queen had begged him to give it to another (whom we may guess was Villiers). He was obliged to tell him that his temper was unbearable. The King's affection for him was great, but he would not be forced any longer to listen to the abusive language with which he had been overwhelmed. Let Somerset, he said, only deal with him as a friend, and there was nothing which he was not ready to grant. But he was resolved not to put up with his present behaviour any longer.

Having thus asserted his sovereign will, James reminded his old favourite that he still held a high position, and that with the Duke of Suffolk, his father-in-law, as the Lord Treasurer, there was no evidence of his having lost authority and power, but that all great offices were in the hands of himself and his family.

For a time the King relieved himself of the increasing ill-humours of the Earl by paying visits to his courtiers in their country houses. At Purbeck he was feasted by Lord Hatton, one of Somerset's enemies, and afterwards he condescended to stay at a "joynture house" of Sir George Villiers's mother, where, we are told by Anthony Weldon, he was magnificently entertained. This was at Gotley, or Godley, House, in Leicestershire, and we should like to have the privilege of a closer sight of His Majesty's visit. The behaviour of the "Toby Belch" knight, Sir Thomas Compton, must have been mirthful to the looker-on, this rustic squire being unused to the company of Kings. But James may well have enjoyed himself. His new Gentleman of the Bedchamber would have done the honours of his mother's house with charming grace, and there were other young men to amuse the King, who loved lusty young manhood—John and Christopher, and George's pretty sister Susan. It was probably on this visit that James first met his young favourite's mother, now Lady Compton, his hostess. Though in later years, when raised to be Countess of Buckingham, she incurred the displeasure of the King by haughty and foolish

ways, she must have been outwardly a charming woman, and to have possessed also considerable strength of character. Bishop Goodman is only one of many who have spoken in her favour, when he said, referring to her earlier years, before she married the farmer-squire, that "maybe she had no great portion, but what was wanting therein she did supply abundantly, by her beauty, her carriage, her good disposition, and might very well be the mother of such a favourite."

After this good entertainment the King made his way homeward, stopping again at sundry houses along his route; and as he neared Whitehall, and Somerset, who sulked there, he became anxious to use all means to reconcile the clashing between his declining and rising favourite. With this view, being at Lulworth, the King employed Sir Humphry May, who was in the service of Somerset, but who had a friendliness towards Sir George, to use his influence (not revealing his instructions from the King) to bring about a more friendly feeling between the Earl and the young Gentleman of the Bedchamber. Villiers also was ordered to follow close upon the heels of this emissary, and to present himself and his service to Somerset. Sir Humphry conducted this delicate task in a way that does not seem to have been extraordinarily tactful.

"My lord," he said to the Lord Chamberlain, "Sir George Villiers will come to you to offer his service, and desire to be your creature, and therefore refuse him not, embrace him, and your lordship shall still stand a great man, though not the sole favourite."

The Earl listened grimly, and did not seem to welcome this advice, so that Sir Humphry May then told him in plain terms that he had been sent by the King to persuade him to a reconciliation, and that Villiers would presently come to cast himself upon the protection of his lordship, and to take his rise under the shadow of his wings.

Half an hour after Sir Humphry had left the Lord Chamberlain, Sir George Villiers came in, hat in hand, and very obsequious towards the great man.

"My lord," he said, "I desire to be your servant and your creature, and shall desire you to take my Court preferment under your favour, and your lordship shall find me as faithful a servant unto you as ever did serve you."

The Earl, looking with his steel-blue eyes at the young man, returned this quick and short answer :

"I will none of your service, and you shall have none of my favour. I will if I can break your neck, and of that be confident."

Anthony Weldon, who tells this story, vouches for "these very words." His authority is not always to be accepted easily, and he is to be found out in many palpable and wanton errors, but there is no reason to doubt that some such scene took place between the old and the new favourite, and there is other and good evidence to show that the King did seek to reconcile the two courtiers.

So the breach between Somerset and James grew wider on account of Villiers, but time lingered before the fall came. We get glimpses of the Court life of George Villiers in this spring-time of his favour, and they are of a merry heart among jesters and laughing knights. The King was in trouble with his Parliament ; his daughter Elizabeth, who had married the King of Bohemia, was with her husband deprived of her crown by the grasp of Austria, and James had other woes. It was therefore a solace for him to laugh at the jokes of his Court gallants, and they kept his spirits up by pranks that leaked out to a Puritanical public, twisted and exaggerated by rumour and scandal. Bishop Goodman has written the King's apology.

"For those sports and merriments" (he wrote), "which Sir Edward Zouch and others did use before the King, to my best remembrance they began when the King was full of sorrow upon the losse of the palatinate, and many breaches with the parliament. Then he considered his own estate, how it was exhausted and misspent by those unto whom he intended most good, . . . then to prevent melancholy, and for avoiding sorrow, I confess the good King gave way to such like sports. And truly Zouch, Goring, and Finet had wit enough to make honest mirth with fooleries ; such as know them will say it."

The Bishop elsewhere says, that "Sir George Villiers had kept much company with the gentlemen waiters, who sometimes after supper did leap and exercise their bodies. But Buckingham of all others was most active." Among the "gentlemen waiters," or, as they would now be called with more dignity, the gentlemen-in-waiting, was Sir John Millisent, "who," says

Weldon, "was commended for notable fooling, and so was he indeed the best extempore fool of all." Then there was Archie, the King's jester, by pay and profession, who seems to have had a shrewd mother-wit, which enabled him to be wise in his folly, not without danger to himself. Archibald Armstrong was the real name of this cannie Scot, who at a later date said many hard things against Archbishop Laud, whom he hated, and who at an earlier time was tossed in a blanket by the followers of Prince Henry, because he had dared to suggest to the King that the son was more popular than his father.

Charles, now Prince of Wales, after the death of his brother Henry, was at this time a boy of fifteen, but old enough to join in the madcap frolics of the King's young men, which in later days, when he came into the serious dignity of his manhood, he must have remembered with some shame.

Sir Anthony Weldon describes some of their diversions in detail, though we may suspect that this Puritan, who had a nose for scandal, made them seem worse than they were. "After the King supped," he writes, "he would come forth to see pastimes and fooleries, in which Sir Edward Zouch, Sir George Goring, and Sir John Finit were the chief and master fools, and surely this fooling got them more than any other's wisdom. Zouch's part was to sing bawdy songs and to tell bawdy tales; Finit's to compose these songs; there was a set of fiddlers brought to Court on purpose for this fooling, and Goring was master of his game for fooleries, sometimes presenting David Droman, and Archee Armstrong, the King's foole on the back of the other foole, to tilt one at another, till they fell together by the eoares; sometimes they performed antick dances."

Certainly some of the jests of these young courtiers passed the limit of good fooling to a scandalous degree. There is a well-known story (found originally in Arthur Wilson's work) of how Villiers, to divert the King and his companions, arranged a mock baptism. A young lady was brought in carrying a pig in the dress of a new-born baby. One Turpin, on this occasion, was dressed like a bishop in all his pontificals. He began the rites of baptism with the common prayer-book in his hand; a silver ewer with water was held by another. George Villiers stood as godfather. When James turned to look at the infant the pig squeaked, and it was an animal which he greatly abhorred.

At this, highly displeased, for, with all his weakness for coarse pleasantry, he hated anything obviously irreverent, he cried, "Out! away, for shame! What blasphemy is this!"

Although Villiers was now safely seated in the affections of the King, it cannot be said that at this time he had any of the influence or power going with the title of first favourite. The flaxen Earl still held all the powers of the Court by right of his office, his family greatness, and his domineering temper, which could still cove the King. But in the autumn of 1615, at the dining-table of the Earl of Shrewsbury a dread secret was told to an eager ear, and the old proverb *in vino veritas* was illustrated once more to the undoing of the powerful Lord Chamberlain and Privy Seal. Since the sudden death of Sir Thomas Overbury rumour had not been quiet, and by one thing and another leaking out among humble people, who dared not, and could not, carry such black tales to high places, but from whom, in that mysterious way of popular rumour, there spread a dreadful miasma of suspicion, the Earl of Somerset was looked upon by many with a certain vague horror and distrust. Then, at Flushing, an apothecary's boy on his deathbed confessed to having put poison in Sir Thomas Overbury's food by order of great people.

One man there was who determined to get at the bottom of these whispered accusations. This was Sir Ralph Winwood, Secretary of State, who hated Somerset for his Spanish policy, and desired beyond all things to drag him down. In one of those coincidences by which fate plays the game, Secretary Winwood, as the guest of the Earl of Shrewsbury, was placed next to Sir Jervis Elways, or Elvis, who was Lieutenant of the Tower, and had been when Overbury died. Winwood got into amiable conversation with him, and then, as if he knew all, and treating the subject lightly, as if it were an old tale, inquired as to the exact details of Overbury's going off. Sir Jervis unbosomed himself with the utmost frankness, and Winwood, with open ears, heard what was of priceless worth to him. He parted later from the Lieutenant of the Tower in a very familiar and friendly way, as if he had received good satisfaction as to the excuses the Lieutenant had framed for himself. But upon taking his leave of the Earl of Shrewsbury and his guests, the Secretary of State travelled back in haste to the King, and told

him in private all he had heard, which was nothing less than an accusation of foul murder against the Earl and Countess of Somerset, and others who had been their confederates in crime.*

We need not think so ill of James as to believe that he heard this thing with any other feeling than horror. He had had the most sincere affection for Robert Carr, and in spite of his old favourite's sullen tempers of late had, as Hume says, great remains of tenderness for him. But there was also cause for great personal uneasiness. Somerset had been so close in his councils that he knew many secrets of State which could not be revealed to the world without danger to the King's own reputation with his people. His negotiations for a Spanish match with the late Prince Henry, in which articles had been drawn up by the Catholic power, though not consented to by James, would cause the greatest offence to English Protestants if the details of them leaked out, and Somerset was privy to the fact that some of his master's gentlemen were receiving money from Spain for secret service and political friendship. This, if known, would hurt the King as much as his friends. If Somerset's papers were seized—and the officers of the law would surely lay hands on them—many awkward facts would be brought to light, and there was no knowing what a man of Somerset's temper would say or do when brought to bay by his enemies.

But the accusation against the Earl was too grave to be hushed up, and James was compelled to assent to its investigation by the Lord Chief Justice, Sir Edward Coke, a man relentless and ferocious in his genius for running his victims to earth, and whose sense of justice was always directed to proving the guilt of the accused.

Coke lost no time in getting on to the tracks of those implicated in the alleged murder. By the confession of the apothecary's boy, and by the confidences of Sir Jervis Elways to Winwood, their names were known, and they were taken in one batch. The Lieutenant of the Tower himself, Sir Thomas Monson, a man named Weston, a quack doctor called Franklin, and Mrs. Turner, a woman of ill fame, were the first prisoners. But there was bigger game, and on October 17, 1615, a commission sitting under the Lord Chief Justice Coke, Lord

* "Autobiography of Sir Symonds D'Ewes."

Chancellor Egerton, and the Attorney-General Francis Bacon, at York House in the Strand, drew up orders for the Earl of Somerset "to keep his chamber near the Cockpit," and to his countess "to keep her chamber at the Blackfriars, or at Lord Knollys's house near his Tilt Yard." The warrant for Somerset's arrest reached him when he was with the King at Royston, in Hertfordshire, where James was holding his Court. James had not breathed a word to his old favourite about the sword of justice hanging over his head, and when the messenger came he found the King with his arm about the Earl's neck, and kissing his cheeks. When the warrant was presented, Somerset, in the first shock of the news, was seized with furious anger, and protested that this arrest in his Royal presence was an outrageous insult to majesty. But James silenced him with a grim remark: "Nay, man, if Coke sends for *me* I must go." Weldon adds that when the Earl had submitted to his arrest, and parted from the King, James said, "The de'il go with thee, for I will never see thy face mair." But there is absolute proof that James had no desire for the Earl's condemnation and death, and if he used those words, "I shall never see thy face more," it was probably with a sudden passion of regret for the doom settling upon his former favourite, who would get no mercy from Sir Edward Coke and his officers of law.

In a letter from John Chamberlain to Sir Dudley Carleton (afterwards Lord Doncaster) we learn that "the lady of Somerset was committed to the Tower upon so short a warning that she had scant leisure to shed a few tears over her little daughter at the parting. Otherwise she carried herself very constantly enough." She begged earnestly that she might not be put into the prison where Overbury had been lodged, fearing no doubt his dreadful ghost, and this request being granted immediately, she was imprisoned in Raleigh's old apartments.

With all his prisoners safe, Sir Edward Coke went about his work with immense zeal, and after three hundred examinations presented a report to the King, in which the charge was drawn up, stating that Frances Countess of Essex had been in the habit of employing sorcery to estrange the affections of her husband, and to win those of Robert Carr, then Viscount Rochester; that to remove Overbury, the great impediment to the projected marriage of the lovers, a plan was concerted

between them and the Earl of Northampton ; that by their joint contrivance Overbury was committed to the Tower, Wade the Lieutenant removed to make place for Elways, and Weston recommended as warder of the prisoner ; that the Countess having, with the aid of Mrs. Turner, procured three kinds of poison from Franklin, an apothecary, intrusted them to the care of Weston ; that by him they were administered to Overbury with the privacy of Elways, and that at last the unfortunate gentleman perished in prison, a victim to the malice or the precaution of Rochester and his mistress.*

In the records of the trials that now caused the most profound sensation throughout the country, we may find one of the most melodramatic stories in the annals of English crimes, and many curious details which throw a vivid light on the superstitions and immorality lurking in the dark corners of Stuart society.

The two prisoners, Mrs. Turner and Dr. Franklin, were an evil pair ; creatures who preyed upon the bodies and souls of human beings and fattened on their vices. It was at Mrs. Turner's houses, at Hammersmith and Paternoster Row, that the Earl of Somerset had kept his secret meetings with the Lady Essex before her divorce. The woman was by trade a milliner and starcher, but in her back parlour she dispensed love-philtres, and was a go-between in the guilty intrigues of Court gallants and citizens' wives, and of others more highly placed.

Although Franklin provided the powders which killed Thomas Overbury, it was another man named Forman who was her closest confederate in these practices. He was a man of education and scientific knowledge, which he debauched to the purposes of quackery and "the hidden art," professing to read the riddle of the future by casting horoscopes, and to influence the fate and fortune of his dupes by sorcery, the philosopher's stone, amulets, and all kinds of charms. Once a schoolmaster without degrees, then a poor scholar of Magdalen College, then a wanderer on the Continent and in the East, where he learnt his magic and black arts, a physician in Philpot Lane, four times imprisoned, and once fined for practising without having graduated, later a resident at Jesus College,

* Lingard.

Cambridge, where he obtained his degree of Doctor of Physic and Astronomy, he finally set up in practice at Lambeth, and obtained some reputation for curing difficult diseases. But the man was too far gone in imposture to make an honest career, and by dabbling with poisons and "magic" powders was soon notorious as a rogue.

It was this man of evil who, with Mrs. Turner the procuress, preyed upon the weakness and guilty passions of Frances Howard, the daughter of the proudest family in England, and the wife of the Earl of Essex. Vile and obscene things were done in the presence of that beautiful girl—she was hardly a woman yet. The quack doctor made little images of wax in the likeness of Somerset and the Countess, and others like the Earl of Essex, the first to be "united and strengthened," the other to be "debilitated and weakened." He also gave powders to this poor victim of passion to be secretly administered to her lover and her husband.

"These things matured and ripened by the juggler Forman gave them assurance of happy hopes. Her courtly incitements that drew the Viscount [Carr, then Viscount Rochester] to observe her, she imputed to the operation of those drugs he had tasted; and that harshness and stubborn comportment she expressed to her husband, making him (weary of such entertainments) to absent himself, she thought proceeded from the effects of those unknown powders that were administered to him. So apt is the imagination to take impressions of those things we are willing to believe."

These things may seem to have but little bearing on the murder of Sir Thomas Overbury, but when Mrs. Turner was put on her trial with Franklin, the other apothecary, this evidence as to the character and evil life of the Countess was dragged from them, the waxen images were produced in court, sending a thrill of horror through the spectators, and indelicate letters from the Countess to the quack were read out, proving to the public mind that Somerset's wife was capable of any guiltiness. Both Franklin and Mrs. Turner were condemned to death, there being no doubt as to their having, in the service of Lady Essex, procured the poison which was administered to Sir Thomas Overbury in the Tower by the wretched apothecary's boy, who on his death-bed had made confession. Upon passing

sentence the Lord Chief Justice Coke added the strange words that "as she was the person who had brought yellow starched ruffs into vogue she should be hanged in that dress, that the same might end in shame and detestation." She was hanged at Tyburn on the 15th November, 1615, and her demeanour on the scaffold, when she gave vent to "deep sighs, tears, confessions, and ejaculations of the soul," excited the maudlin commiseration of the spectators. Pity was ill bestowed upon this woman and Franklin, who both deserved death as accessories to the crime. But there is no clear evidence as to the guilt of Sir Jervis Elways, the Lieutenant of the Tower, or of Weston, who had been Overbury's warder. The Lieutenant had confessed in writing to the King that he had met Weston carrying poison, and had prevented him from attempting to give it to Overbury. He stated that renewed attempts had been made to convey poison to Overbury, but that he had succeeded in frustrating them till the apothecary's boy eluded his vigilance. Weston himself confessed that he had thrown away poison in consequence of the Lieutenant's rebuke, and while he was the first to implicate Lady Somerset, steadily denied that he had actually administered poison. For a time he refused to plead, and it was only under threat of the *peine forte et dure*, that is to say, the terrible torture of the rack and press, that he was induced to stand to his trial. By what must be considered as a juggling of evidence on the part of Coke, his condemnation was procured, Sir Jervis Elways having been already condemned, upon equally dubious proofs, and both were executed. Many people believed that he had been made a victim to shelter Somerset, who had not yet been brought up for trial, and when Weston went to the scaffold there was a remarkable demonstration. Several gentlemen, including Sir J. Hollis, Sir J. Wentworth, Sir Thomas Vavasour, and Sir Henry Vane, rode up to the gallows and called on Weston to confess the fact if he were guilty. "Fact or not fact," he replied, "I die worthily." The curious gentlemen were afterwards summoned before the Star Chamber for slandering the King's Justice, and two of them, Hollis and Wentworth, were sentenced to suffer a year's imprisonment and to pay a fine of a thousand pounds.

Sir William Monson, who had procured Weston's place in the Tower, was next called to the bar, but he strenuously denied



LADY ESSEX, AFTERWARDS COUNTESS OF SOMERSET
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any part in the crime, and his trial was postponed by Coke, whose brain was by this time inflamed with many wild and whirling actions. Franklin, the poison compounder, in the hope of saving himself had flung out mysterious accusations, and these had stirred the imagination of the Lord Chief Justice, though they had been of no use to the criminal. In searching through the papers of the Earl of Somerset, of Monson and the other prisoners, he had smelt high treason and Spanish plots. Coke made the most of his suspicions and threw out dark hints. "Knowing," he said, "as much as I know, if this plot had not been found out, neither court, city, nor any particular houses had 'scaped the malice of that wicked crew." He did not stop at this, but hinted that Prince Henry, the heir to the Throne, had been done to death. Partly to obtain further information about these suspected Spanish plots in which Coke believed that both Somerset and Monson were deeply involved, and partly because the King expressed his strong belief that Monson was quite innocent, the case was postponed for some months until Digby, afterwards Earl of Bristol, our ambassador at the Spanish Court, should return home. It was not till May, therefore, of the following year, 1616, that the trial was resumed, Digby having in the meanwhile assured the commissioners that Somerset had not been guilty of any treasonable correspondence with Spain. The case now came into the hands of the Attorney-General, Francis Bacon, who for some time had been in close counsel with the King as to the conduct of the trial. James had been severely displeased with the Lord Chief Justice for giving expression to such wild and disturbing charges, and Bacon, who, in spite of his partisan fashion of administering justice, had a clear legal mind and cold judgment, brushed on one side all these irrelevant suspicions. The Attorney-General was fully convinced of the guilt of both the Earl and Countess, and was resolved to secure their condemnation as speedily as possible, knowing that although the King was inclined to mercy (though he also seems to have had no doubt as to his favourite's guilt) he was in an agony of apprehension as to what Somerset might say in his endeavour to save himself by implicating his Royal master, and revealing by hinting at secrets of State. The trial of Lady Somerset, which took place in Westminster Hall, was simple enough. The evidence was plain against her,

and she pleaded guilty. It was a remarkable and tragic scene. The court was crowded with the peers and gentlemen who but a few short months before had done homage to her beauty, and had been eager in their flattery. Now in the gaze of these curious eyes this young and still beautiful woman trembled and turned pale, and, seized by the shame and horror of her position, hid her face behind her fan. Bacon, having summed up the facts for the prosecution, asked her whether she desired to say anything in arrest of judgment. In a faint voice, so that eager ears could scarcely hear her words, she answered that she could not excuse her fault. She begged for mercy, and prayed that the Lords would intercede for her with the King. Then, as once or twice before, she burst into tears. Her beauty and her youthfulness moved the onlookers in spite of her acknowledged guiltiness. Sir Dudley Carleton's garrulous correspondent, Chamberlain, who was in the Court, says that "she won pity by her sober demeanour," but he, being in a critical mood, adds, "which, in my opinion, was more curious and confident than was fit for a lady in such distress, yet she shed or made show of some tears at divers times."

Ellesmere, the Lord Chancellor, pronounced sentence of death upon her, and the unhappy woman was taken back to the Tower to await the King's decision as to whether that sentence would be executed upon her.

On the day following, Somerset himself was brought to the bar. But much had taken place behind the scenes previous to this public appearance before his judges. Many communications had passed between him and the King, directly and indirectly. Knowing the character of James as well as any man, the Earl had played upon its weakness by threats of disclosing State secrets, by accusing the King of giving way to Coke's wilfulness, by suggesting that James would be endangered by ranging against himself as mortal enemies the great family of the Howards, by protesting violently against the injustice of being tried by his personal and malignant foes. James was most distressed and bewildered by his former favourite's behaviour, but showed more dignity and firmness than Somerset had expected of him. His past affection for the Earl still remained strong enough to induce him to use his prerogative of mercy should the prisoner be found guilty, and it is evident

from the King's letters to his counsellors that from the beginning he was resolved to save the man's life. But he would not allow himself to be browbeaten and blackmailed into setting aside the course of justice, and though he was nervous as to what wild accusations Somerset might in his rage fling out in open court, he was resolved that he should stand his trial. The King's great hope was that Somerset, whom he firmly believed had connived at Overbury's murder, should plead guilty, so that the public trial should be short and without scandal. To this end he sent some of his gentlemen secretly to the prisoner to promise him life and fortune if he would confess. But Somerset, who was, as we now may believe, at least technically innocent of the murder, was violent in his refusal of this suggestion. "Life and fortune," he said, "are not worth the acceptance when honour is gone." On the very day before his trial he swore that he would not appear in court, feigning illness, and even madness. Once again the King sent to him, this time Lord Hay and Sir Robert Carr, and to Sir George More, the Lord Lieutenant, he sent word that if Somerset still refused to go to the bar he must take him there by force. "If," he added, with a last hope of Somerset's confession, "he have saide any thing of moment to the Lord Haye I expect to heare of it with all speede, if otherwayes lette me not be trublit with it till the tryall be past."

Somerset, finding that all his threats and violence were of no avail, yielded to the inevitable, and when he stood at last at the bar of justice, it was with a dignity and resolute courage of demeanour which win some respect for him. The court was crowded with the men who hated him, or who had been his dependants. There is no doubt that George Villiers was there watching that great prisoner, whose downfall was to be his own opportunity of rising. The position of Villiers was already assured and acknowledged, and during Somerset's imprisonment he had been close in the King's counsels. The Attorney-General Bacon had advised with him by correspondence on the subject of the trial, a sure proof of his new influence at Court.

Somerset's defence was not without sincerity and truth. He flouted the accusations by which Franklin the quack had sought to implicate him. "Let not you there, my noble peers, rely upon the memorative relation of such a villain as Franklin,

CHAPTER III

THE FIRST FAVOURITE

WHEN the unhappy Earl was accused and then disgraced, it was clear even to those who could not closely watch the King's behaviour that young Sir George Villiers was to be the reigning favourite. He was made Master of the Horse, a post, it is true, having no political importance, but of high social honour in the Court of a King whose chief pleasure was in the hunting field, and who loved the gossip of the stable. He was also in an unofficial position of extraordinary influence, for James took him into his most secret councils, and as private secretary he possessed the key to the King's mind, and to the whole business of Royal patronage and diplomacy. At this time there were many favourably disposed to him and few resolute enemies, for he was not great enough to be feared and hated, and as yet had not revealed the arrogant and careless spirit which possessed him when he came to his full power. He was modest, affable, and full of courtesy, and it seemed to those who had first brought him into Royal favour that he would serve their interests and be a pliant tool, while those who had most to fear from the downfall of Somerset—the great Howard family and their dependants—were not as yet aware that in this handsome youth of easy grace and charm of manner they would find a dangerous rival. When at a later date he was sworn of the Privy Council, "as though," says Wotton, "a Favourite were not so before," and James, struck anew by his beauty, dubbed him "Steenie"—that pet name by which he was henceforth called by his fond master, it was from a fanciful allusion to St. Stephen, when "all that sat in the council, looking on him saw his face as if it had been the face of an angel."

And truly at that time Villiers, though his young blood was hot within him, had qualities nearer the angelic character (though not very near) than in his later years when he came to his full pride. Bishop Goodman, dilating on that beauty of person which has been described by many others, bears witness also to his inward grace.

"He had a very lovely complexion ; he was the handsomest bodied man of England ; his limbs so well compacted, and his conversation so pleasing, and of so sweet a disposition. And truly his intellectuals were very great : he had a sound judgment, and was of a quick apprehension, in so much that I have heard it from two men and very great men . . . that he was as inwardly beautiful as he was outwardly, and that the world had not a more ingenious gentleman, or words to that effect." His boyish, indeed his almost girlish looks, in this first flush of life, made him seem to observers a youth in whom there was no guile. Sir Symonds D'Ewes, who saw him once standing among a number of swarthy "French monsieurs" in the tilting yard at Whitehall, comments on this characteristic of the young knight : "I saw everything in him full of delicacy and handsome features, yea his hands and feet seemed to be specially effeminate and curious."

He stood well with the great lords about the King, not having as yet a party of his own. After Somerset's disgrace, James had purchased peace in the family of his Court by conferring the great offices of State, which were then reshuffled, on men of the most opposite interests and character, so that no one family or party was unduly favoured. Pembroke, the noble Earl, received the office of Lord Chamberlain, then vacant by Somerset's removal. The Catholic Earl of Worcester (one of the Spanish party, and therefore politically opposed to Pembroke) became Lord Privy Seal, and to counteract the influence of Secretary Winwood, who was rabid in his hatred for Spain, Lake, who was actually receiving a pension from the Spanish Government, and was a creature of the Howards, was made a Secretary of State. The Howards themselves did not share in the disgrace of the Earl, their kinsman by marriage. Suffolk was still Lord Treasurer, squandering vast sums through sheer carelessness and inefficiency. Nottingham was Lord High Admiral, letting the fleet go to ruin, and being cheated from top

to bottom by those in his employ, who were making fortunes out of the building and victualling of His Majesty's ships, and the administration of the Navy department. These, of the Howard family, and their hangers-on, were inclined to be haughty and insolent to young Villiers, who had ousted the last great Favourite, but George was content to bide his time. Meanwhile the younger men at Court, and those with ambitions unsatisfied, paid their homage to the ascendant star, and sought to gain his friendship. Naturally also there were many jealous of his fortune, and some like Chamberlain, the friend of Dudley Carleton, who when George Villiers fell sick in April of the year 1616, hoped that smallpox would mar his beauty. "But it proved otherwise," writes this correspondent dolefully, "and we see there is much casting about how to make him a great man, and that he shall now be made of the Garter. But *non credo*." *

Chamberlain, however, had to swallow his unbelief, for on St. George's Day of 1616 Villiers and the Earl of Rutland, afterwards his father-in-law, were admitted to the Most Noble Order, not without some murmuring among those who were always on the look-out for omens of political disaster. The Puritans growled at this honour to Rutland, because his wife was an open and well-known "recusant" (that is to say, of the old faith), and the Earl was said to have many dangerous people about him. That Villiers should be given the Garter seemed a scandal, because he had not the wealth and lands to do credit to this dignity of princes and great lords. But those who put forward such a reason were the fools of their own envy. George Villiers was not long a lackland. The King would have given him Somerset's forfeited estate of Sherborne, which had belonged also to another favourite, Elizabeth having given it to Raleigh, who was now eating his heart out in the Bloody Tower. But Villiers did not covet the place, though it was a rich possession. His generous instincts recoiled from the thought of founding his fortune upon the very hearthstone of his fallen rival. Also, the place was reputed to be unlucky to those who gained it by Royal gift, and this had weight with Villiers, who was superstitious. Sherborne was therefore given to Sir John Digby, our ambassador to Spain, and Villiers did not lose by

* "Court and Times of James I."

its refusal, getting instead estates formerly belonging to Lord Grey, which were valued at £80,000, being twice the worth of Sherborne.*

The prodigal Scot, James Hay, Earl of Carlisle, had hoped to get the Garter when Villiers was raised to the Order, and lingered about the Court in this expectation, but vainly. He was now sent on a mission to France to discuss terms of marriage between Prince Charles and the French King's sister, and Villiers, whom he envied, but did not dislike, being of an easy temper and without malice, received a lesson in magnificent display which he afterwards emulated with complete success. The preparations for Hay's embassy were the talk of the Court and town, and the King's treasury being very low at this time, it devolved upon Villiers to suggest expedients for raising money to equip an ambassador who had high notions of the splendour of his mission. It gave the Favourite a chance of exercising his patronage in the King's service, and he brought £10,000 to the Treasury for the expenses of Hay's journey, by getting a peerage from James for Sir John Roper, of the Court of King's Bench, who had long coveted the honour, and was willing to pay for it. By this means Steenie himself was glorified. He had made a peer of the realm, which is more than most men can do. He had shown a business-like instinct, pleasing to his master, and he had enabled Hay to gratify his expensive vanity.

Hay made the most of his opportunity, though there were jesters at Court who laughed at him. Chamberlain, writing to Carleton, says :

"He goes with great pomp, but is like to be shrewdly disappointed, for having made twenty special suits of apparel for so many days abode, beside his travelling robes, news is lately come that the French have newly changed or altered this fashion, whereby he must needs be out of countenance, if he be not set out after the last edition. But the Lady Haddington hath bestowed a favour upon him that will not easily fall to the ground ; for she says the honour and beauty of his embassy consists in three mignards, three dancers, and three fools or buffoons. The mignards are himself, Sir Harry Rich, and Sir George Goring " (the first companions of Villiers as Gentlemen-

* "Court and Times."

in-Waiting); "the dancers, Sir Gilbert Hawton, Auchmonty, and Abercrombie; the fools or buffoons are Sir Thomas Jermyn, Sir Ralph Sheldon, and Sir Thomas Badger."

Hay was not such a fool, however, as his foppishness gave out, and though his mission to France was unsuccessful in bringing off a marriage treaty, it was to his credit that he advised the King against accepting demands which would have inevitably aroused the passion of English Protestants. Meanwhile, the Favourite, who had provided funds for a magnificence which still makes Hay a splendid memory in French history (it is said that his very horse was shod with silver), received still greater honours from the King. As Wotton says, "Favours came thick upon him liker mean showers than sprinkling Drops or Dews." In August he was raised to the peerage as Baron Whaddon, and then to a higher step as Viscount Villiers. In January of the following year he was made Earl of Buckingham. The King, as "architect of his fortunes," as he was pleased to call himself, had done his work quickly, and had made this rolling stone the corner-piece of his Court. It was only two years since "dogge Steenie" had been out at elbows, a hanger-on among the riff-raff. Now he was equal in rank to the lords who had used his handsome face against Carr, and beyond all great lords in his influence over the sovereign will. The King was never happy if his favourite were absent from him, and he loved to hang on the arm of the handsome fellow who was now the central figure in all the prodigal magnificence of the Stuart Court. For his pleasure James devised banquets and merry masques, and all who wished for Royal patronage followed the lead of majesty and paid homage to the reigning favourite, the dispenser and arbitrator of honours and perquisites.

"On Twelfth Night," writes Chamberlain to his friend Carleton, "the new-made Earl and the Earl of Montgomery" (Pembroke's brawling, spendthrift brother) "danced with the Queen. . . . Yesterday the Middle Templars entertained the Earl of Buckingham with a masque, whether it be that he was of their society, or that they would preoccupy his favour."

Francis Bacon, the great Attorney-General, was not among the laggards to pay court to the brilliant young favourite. Like others at this time, he believed that the character of George Villiers would be an influence for good over James, and

if he could be rightly advised to use his power for other than mere personal advantages, upholding the authority of the King his master, and of the great officers of State ; if he adopted a broad policy of patriotism, instead of descending to party intrigues ; if he retained his modesty of bearing and listened to the counsels of experienced men, then his great position would be a blessing to the nation. So Bacon, in his philosophical way, thinking always of broad issues while inattentive to minor facts, took a rosy view of Buckingham's supremacy over the King's affections, and became his ardent champion and faithful counsellor. In a long and famous letter of advice to the new man he revealed this optimism, and that wisdom and noble serenity which are in all his writings, though not always in his own deeds.

"You are now the King's favourite," he wrote, "so noted, and so esteemed by all . . . Remember then what your true condition is. The King himself is above the reach of his people, but cannot be above their censures ; and you are his shadow, if either he commit an error and is loath to avow it, but excuses it upon his Ministers, of which you are the first in his eyes : or you commit the fault or have willingly permitted it, and must suffer for it ; so perhaps you may be offered as a sacrifice to please the multitude. But admit you were in no such danger, as I hope you are not, and that you are answerable only to God and the King for your actions, yet remember well the great trust you have undertaken. You are as a continual sentinel, always to stand upon your watch, and to give him the true intelligence. If you flatter him you betray him. If you conceal the truth of those things from him, which concern his justice or his honour (although not the safety of his person), you are as dangerous a traitor to this State as he that riseth in arms against him. A false friend is more dangerous than an open enemy." After this candid counsel, Bacon launched into a long discourse concerning the great principles of Royal prerogative, religion, State business, foreign policy, trade, and Court favour, concluding with the earnest prayer that the young favourite might long live "a happy instrument" to his King and country.*

In return for Francis Bacon's friendship, Geordie Villiers, who was now Earl of Buckingham, graciously extended his

* Spedding's "Life and Letters of Francis Bacon."

George Villiers had many faults, but a good heart. His affection for his own kinsfolk, for his brothers and half-brothers, and sister Susan, and specially for his lady mother, who had had the making of him, is not discreditable to his character, though it was the cause of scandal among his enemies, who soon learnt to hate the name of Villiers. Lady Compton, as his mother was now known, was brought up to town (Sir Thomas being apt to boast of his great madam and gallant George among his old friends in the country), and her son was faithful in his devotion to her, though her gushing and excitable temperament, and afterwards, her arrogant behaviour at Court, was a cause of embarrassment at times. Edward Villiers, eldest half-brother to George, was given a knighthood, and made Master of the Mint. Christopher, George's own younger brother, was made a Gentleman of the Bedchamber, and afterwards Master of the Wardrobe. As we shall see later, they endeavoured to enlarge their fortunes by business enterprises of a somewhat shady character. John, though he was a little weak in the head, was also knighted, and made Gentleman-in-Waiting to young Prince Charles. Little Susan was remembered also, and as the sister of the Favourite, and a beauty in her own right, she was not likely to be left unnoticed. Even the Compton side of the family was not without honour, though Sir Thomas himself was too devoted to strong potations to be brought forward.

The industrious correspondent Chamberlain, though he had no fondness for the favourite, does not blame him for this. "I cannot but commend that good Lord's disposition in doing good to his kindred and friends, though some rhyming companions do not forbear to tax him for it; as one, by way of a prognostication, says—

"Above in the skies shall Gemini rise
And Twins the court shall pester,
George shall up his brother Jack,
And Jack his brother Kester.'"

With more of the like stamp."

We find much more of the same stamp in the "Poems and Songs relating to George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham," collected by the Percy Society. Many of the verses are too

* Short for Christopher.

lewd to be published, and one of them which satirizes the favours shown to the Villiers family and all their connections by marriage is in the coarsest vein. It begins with the following lines :—

"Heavens blesse King James our joy,
And Charles his baby,
Great George, our brave Viceroy,
And his faire lady ;
Old Beldam Buckingham
And her Lord Keeper ;

* * * * *
These are they beare the sway, in courte and citty
And yet few love them, the greater's the pitty."

Lord Keeper Williams was falsely supposed to be over-familiar with the Duke's mother, but the lines omitted are too obscene for publication.

The noble Earl, our youthful George, was delighted to sun himself among his kindred, and being a warm-hearted fellow it was good to be surrounded with the faces of those companions of their youth. They brought the familiar old country customs and turns of speech, and rustic dances were introduced to Court, the King himself being pleased to take part in them, and delighted with the Villiers boys and girls. Anthony Weldon is spiteful about all this :

"And now Buckingham," he writes, "having the chancellor, treasurer, and all great officers his very slaves, swells in the height of pride, and summons up all the country kindred, the old Countess providing a place for them to learn to carry themselves in a court-like garb, but because they could not learn the French dances so soon as to be suitable in their gay clothes, country dances (for their sakes only) must be the garb of the Court, and none else must be used."

Then going on without a break, though referring to a later period when there were little members of the Villiers family, he says, "Little children did run up and down the King's lodgings like little rabbit-starters about their burrows. Here was a strange change, that the King who formerly could not endure his queene now you would have judged that none but women frequented them ; nay that was not all, but the kindred had the houses about White-Hall—as if they had been bulwarks and flankers to that cittadell." Although written with malice

intent, there is something rather pretty in this picture of Whitehall echoing with the pattering footsteps of the little ones.

In the spring of this year 1617, the King made a Royal progress to Scotland, fourteen years having passed since he had been to Holyrood, his first Court, and the scene of his early adventures in kingcraft. With him went the First Favourite and those minor favourites who were, with Buckingham himself, his playfellows and companions—Sir George Goring, who had now returned from the French mission; Sir Edward Zouch; Sir John Finit, the Master of Etiquette, and others, who, as Arthur Wilson says quaintly, "would fit and obtemperate the King's humour." Leaving the business of State behind him in the hands of Bacon, the Lord Keeper, and the other great officers, the King gave himself up to pleasure, and on the road to the North stayed at many country houses of the nobility and gentry of the kingdom, who at great expense showed their loyalty by lavish entertainment. All along the road there were merry doings to beguile the journey, and while the days were cut short the nights were lengthened, contrary to the season. "For what with Hawking, Hunting, and Horse-racing," says Wilson, "the days quickly ran away, and the nights with Feasting, Masking and Dancing, were the more extended." Buckingham and the gay fellows of the Court aided the country hosts in providing joyous entertainments, and James, out for a holiday, was well pleased. "For he loved such representations, and disguises in their maskeraoes, as were witty and sudden; the more ridiculous the more pleasant. And his new Favourite, being an excellent Dancer, brought this pastime in the greater request." Wilson here hits on a good conceit and makes the most of it: "No man," he says, "dances better, no man runs or jumps better, and indeed he jumpt higher than every Englishman in so short a time, from a private Gentleman to a Dukedome."*

It was remarked by watchful eyes that the King was never in easy mind if Buckingham were away from him, and seeing this the courtiers and the country gentlemen fawned on the favourite. Yet Buckingham, though expectant now of this homage, and ready to declare any man his enemy who refused it, was kept sane and cheery by his natural amiability. Wotton, in his

* It was six years from this time before Buckingham became a Duke.

curious little work, "A Parallel between Robert, late Earle of Essex, and George, late Duke of Buckingham," pays a tribute to this sweetness of disposition.

"Buckingham," he says, "even in the midst of so many diversions, had continually a very pleasant and vacant face (as I may well call it), proceeding no doubt from a singular assurance in his temper. And yet I must here give him a rarer Elogie, which the malignest eyes cannot deny him. That certainly never man in his place and power did entertaine greatness more familiarly, nor whose lookes were less tainted with his felicities—wherein I insist the rather, because this in my judgment was one of his greatest vertues and victories of himselfe."

While Buckingham was with the King in Scotland, some curious episodes in the history of his family were being enacted in London, the news of which was sent post haste to the Favourite, and caused his first anger against Bacon, the Lord Keeper, whose advice on this matter did not give satisfaction to him.

George's mother, Lady Compton, proud of the great fortune to which he had been lifted, was bent on procuring a wealthy bride for her other son, Sir John Villiers. This young man, who had none of his great brother's wit, but some of his ambition, had fixed his affections upon Frances Coke, a daughter of the ex-Lord Chief Justice by his marriage with the rich widow, Lady Hatton, sister of Lord Burleigh, Elizabeth's Treasurer. The girl was one of the beauties of the Court, and, owing to the great wealth of both her mother and father, was coveted by many gallants, who liked beauty best when set in a golden frame. Sir Edward Coke, himself, was not averse to the match. He saw in this proposed alliance with the Villiers family a chance of lifting himself again into Court favour, and getting his revenge against his old rival Bacon. Proud Lady Compton, who negotiated with him, opened her mouth too wide at the thought of his money-bags, and Coke, "sticking at the thousand a year," which she demanded as his daughter's marriage portion, "and resolving only to give ten thousand marks, dropped some idle words that he would not buy the King's favour too dear." The plea of economy was overcome by the impetuosity of Lady Compton and by the continued disgrace of the old

lawyer, and it was agreed, after more haggling, that the beautiful girl should be married to young John Villiers. Her own desires of course, were left out of the question, as usual in marriage treaties of this period.

But Lady Compton, who now thought she had won everything, found that she had gained nothing, and she had to face a formidable enemy, the mother of the girl. Burleigh's sister, Lady Hatton, had the strength of mind and indomitable will of Elizabeth's great Treasurer, and if there were one man in the world she detested, and one woman she despised, they were Edward Coke, her husband, and Lady Compton, the mother of the Favourite.

Coke had not had an easy time with his wife, whom he had married for money. She had retained her own name as Lady Hatton, and after many quarrels (their tempers were terrific) and Coke's disgrace, she had abandoned him, and moving about to her various residences in town and country, disfurnished her "lord and master's" house in Holborn, removed all her plate and furniture from his other house in Stoke Pogis, and left him, though reconciled to the absence of a termagant wife, disconsolate at the discomfort of his home-life.

When faced by the arrangements for the marriage of Frances with the favourite's brother John—Secretary Winwood backing the match, and threatening that "the girl should be married from her in spite of mother's teeth," and Sir Edward "daily tormenting the girl with discourses tending to bestow her against her liking"*—she stuck at nothing to thwart her husband, whom she now hated more than ever. She went so far as to forge a document by which Frances was bound to the Earl of Oxford (now abroad), which the poor girl herself was persuaded to sign, and this done, she put her daughter in the charge of a relative, Ned Withipole, to keep her out of the old man's clutches.

But Sir Edward Coke was now as much set on the marriage as he had formerly been averse to it, and losing his temper and judgment, both too easily overthrown, met his wife's stratagems by extraordinary violence, scandalous in one who had been Lord Chief Justice, and was considered by the people to be "the oracle of the law." With a dozen tall fellows heavily

* They are Lady Hatton's words.

armed, he proceeded, without warrant or constable, to lay siege to the house where Lady Hatton was then staying, and battering down the doors of the gate-house and of the house itself, did "in a barbarous manner" tear the daughter from her mother. Clem Coke, the old lawyer's son, and a strapping fellow of fighting fame, was a ringleader of this outrage, and the lady complained that he threatened her servants so grievously that "the poor men run away to hide themselves from his fury and dare not appear abroad."

Here was a pretty to-do! The noise of it was all over the town, and when Lady Hatton appeared before the Council to lay an accusation against her husband, the ex-Lord Chief found that he had gone too far. He blustered that he could make his action good by law, and that "he feared the face of no greatness," a dangerously bold assertion to justify an action which had no lawful authority of any kind.

Francis Bacon, whose rivalry with Coke had been long and bitter, and who had been relieved by his old enemy's disgrace, was naturally averse to a marriage scheme by which the choleric old lawyer hoped to raise himself. He, therefore, fell out with Ralph Winwood, the Secretary, who was supporting the suit of Lady Compton and the Villiers youth. There were strained relations between these two men which were not passed unnoticed by the watchful eyes of courtiers practised in reading the way of the wind by small straws. Winwood, entering a room where Bacon was, pushed a dog off a seat on which it had been sleeping. "A gentleman," said the philosopher, with quiet sarcasm, "loves a dog." At another time, the Secretary taking a seat near to the Lord Keeper, Bacon told him haughtily to remember his place, and keep further off.

It is evident that Bacon at this time did not in the least understand that the Favourite was a party to this marriage scheme of his brother's, nor did he guess how dangerous Buckingham would be if his purpose were crossed in the matter, or any other upon which he had set his heart. The Lord Keeper was so sure of the Earl's friendship, having done many services for him in business affairs, and having forwarded his wishes regarding the advancement of his own suitors, that he had no hesitation in advising him against the proposed match, and censuring Coke for his turbulent behaviour. He wrote

to Buckingham in Scotland, protesting that such a match would be very inconvenient both to himself and his brother, because—

“First, He shall marry into a disgraced house, which in reason of state is never held good.

“Next, He shall marry into a troubled house of man and wife, which in religion and Christian discretion is disliked.

“Thirdly, Your Lordship will go near to lose all such your friends as are adverse to Sir Edward Coke ; (myself—only except, who out of a pure love and thankfulness shall ever be firm to you).” *

Bacon also wrote to the King, begging that if His Majesty approved of the proposed match he would give his own instructions to the Keeper of his Privy Seal. “For if,” said Bacon, “I should be requested in it from my Lord of Buckingham, the answer of a true friend ought to be, that I had rather go against his mind than against his good : but your Majesty I must obey ; and besides I shall conceive that your Majesty out of great wisdom and depth doth see these things which I see not.”

Buckingham was deeply incensed by Bacon’s action in this matter, and the letters he received from Lady Compton and his brother, as well as the malicious words of flatterers always ready to stir up strife, increased his resentment. He was heard to say that the Lord Keeper was behaving to him with the base ingratitude which Bacon had previously shown to those who had been his early patrons. He wrote a short, sharp letter of reproof to his best and noblest friend.

“In this business of my brother’s,” he said, “that you overtrouble yourself with, I understand from London of some of my friends that you have carried yourself with much scorn and neglect both toward myself and friends ; which if it be true I blame not you but myself.”

The King was not less angry. To displease the favourite, upon whom he doted, was the greatest offence to himself. He was also personally anxious for the match, because in the exhausted state of the Treasury it were better that John Villiers—who as the favourite’s brother must be supported—should dip his hands into Lady Hatton’s money-bags than into

* Spedding’s “Life and Letters.”



KING JAMES I
AFTER THE PORTRAIT BY G. P. HARDING

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the Royal purse. He therefore wrote a scolding letter to the Lord Keeper, addressed to "Mr. Bacon," in which he vindicated the action of Coke, and signified his desire that no obstacles should be placed in the way of a father who had every right to bestow his daughter's hand upon whomsoever he pleased. An old-fashioned doctrine, but—*nous avons changé tout cela!* Lady Hatton was meanwhile ordered to produce the document which she pretended had been accepted by the Earl of Oxford.

To Bacon the letters of the King and Buckingham came as a great shock. That Buckingham should turn upon him in such anger was a new and painful revelation of the Favourite's character, and the King's letter showed how completely James was under the influence of a man who with many fine qualities had, it seemed, a dangerous wilfulness which not even friendship would restrain.

The Lord Keeper made up his mind quickly. If the King desired the marriage, well and good. It mattered nothing to Bacon himself one way or the other. His whole life had been in defence of the Royal prerogative, and though he was always ready respectfully to advise the mind of Majesty, he was resolute never to disobey a Royal command. He wrote long letters of apology and devotion to James and the Favourite. But neither of them was prepared to accept his defence, and some incautious words, wrongly interpreted by the King, called forth another letter of Royal rebuke, while Buckingham answered with a curt reference to his previous communications on the subject, "without making," he said, "a needless repetition." Bacon had cause to be most uneasy, and he anxiously awaited the report of his friend Yelverton, the Attorney-General (implicated also in the opposition to the match), who went to Coventry, with Coke, the enemy in this business, to meet the Court on its way back from Scotland. On the homeward journey a plot was discovered against Buckingham in which the Earl of Somerset's party were implicated. Chamberlain, in a letter dated August 27, 1617, writes: "On Saturday last, here passed by Ware, one Ker a Scottish gentleman, suspected and charged together with some others of that family and name, to have conspired the death of the Earl of Buckingham, at his coming out of Scotland, and so were apprehended about Carlisle,

where the Marquis of Hamilton was sworn of the Council of England." *

When Yelverton met the King and his Favourite his report was not reassuring.

"I dare not think my journey lost," he wrote, "because I have with much joy seen the face of my master the King, though more clouded towards me than I looked for. Sir Edward Coke hath not forborne by any engine to heave both at your Honour and myself; and he works by the weightiest instrument, the Earl of Buckingham, who as I see sets him as close to him as his shirt, the Earl speaking in Sir Edward's phrase, and as it were menacing in his spirit.

"My Lord, I emboldened myself to assay the temper of my Lord of Buckingham to myself; and found it very fervent, misled by information which yet I find he embraced as truth, and did nobly and plainly tell me he would not secretly bite, but whosoever had had any interest or tasted of the opposition to his brother's marriage he would as openly oppose them to their faces, and they should discern what favour he had by the power he would use."

Yelverton made some impression upon Buckingham's mind, but left him "leaning still to the first relation of envious and odious adversaries." It is, however, characteristic of Buckingham throughout his career, that while he was quick to declare open hostility to any who thwarted him he would never "secretly bite," and was generous to make amends to any friend whom he had unjustly suspected of enmity. Upon his return to London, he heard some of the facts which had been kept back from him by the Coke and Compton faction, and it was made clear to him that Bacon had no personal interest in opposing the match. The King, more prejudiced, seriously proposed to put a mark of public disgrace upon the Lord Keeper, but if we may believe Buckingham, and he was not a liar in such cases, he begged on his knees that Bacon should not suffer a reprimand.

"Thus," he writes, "your Lordship seeth the fruits of my natural inclination; and I protest all this time past it was no small grief unto me to hear the mouth of so many upon this occasion open to load you with innumerable malicious and

* "Court and Times of James I."

distracting speeches, as if no music were more pleasing to my ears than to rail of you : which made me rather regret the ill-nature of mankind, that like dogs love to set upon him that they see once snatched at." *

It was Buckingham who, now knowing the facts, should have begged pardon of his great friend, but Bacon was profound in his gratitude for the forgiveness of faults of which he was in no way guilty.

The following letter went to the Favourite :—

" My ever best Lord, now better than yourself,

" Your Lordship's pen, or rather, pencil, hath portrayed towards me such magnanimity and nobleness and true kindness as methinketh I see the image of some ancient virtues, and not anything of these times. It is the line of my life, and not the lines of my letter, that must express my thankfulness : wherein, if I fail, then God fail me, and make me as miserable as I think myself at this time happy by this reviver, through his Majesty's singular clemency, and your incomparable love and favour. God preserve you, prosper you, and reward you for your kindness to

" Your raised and infinitely obliged friend and servant,

" FR. BACON, C. S.

" Sept. 22, 1617 "

So the breach was healed between Privy Seal and the Favourite. On January 7th, 1618, Bacon was formally appointed as Lord Chancellor, and in July raised to the peerage as Lord Verulam. But the quarrel marked a turning point in the character of one of the parties in this quarrel. Buckingham, who had borne himself with such "singular sweetness" towards the great lords and gentlemen during his progress to high fortune, revealed over this paltry business the mettle of an uncertain temper which would turn him to fierce resentment against one who had served him best. There were others in the Court as well as Bacon who noted these signs of dangerous arrogance.

The Villiers family and Coke won the game. Lady Hatton, "crazy in body and sick in mind," was threatened with a Royal

* Spedding's "Life and Letters of Francis Bacon."

commission to examine her for conspiracy and disobedience, and under such pressure gave her consent to the marriage, and pleaded for forgiveness from the King. Coke was raised again to Royal favour, and sat at the Council Board from which he had been put down. But he paid heavily for the privilege, £30,000 of his fortune being set aside for his daughter's dowry.

The marriage between John Villiers and Frances Coke took place on the 29th of September, but it was not a merry wedding. The Scottish historian Johnston says that it was celebrated "with gratulation of the fawning courtiers, but stained by the tears of the reluctant bride." Afterwards there were many who remembered the tears and the evil omen of a weeping bride. For the marriage which had been made in such trouble ended in tragedy. John Villiers, having been raised to the peerage as Viscount Purbeck, became insane in 1620, and was deserted by his wife in 1621. Three years later, at the instance of Christopher Villiers, Earl of Anglesey, she was arrested on a charge of adultery with Sir Robert Howard, the Earl of Suffolk's son, by whom she had a child. "When," says Chamberlain, in a private letter to his friend Carleton, "she was carried to Sergeant's Inn, to be examined by the new Lord Chief Justice and others, she said she marvelled what those four old cuckolds had to say to her. There is an imputation laid on her that with powder and potion she did intoxicate her husband's brains, and practised somewhat, in that kind, upon the Duke of Buckingham. This they say is confessed by one Lambe, a notorious old rascal." *

Lady Hatton was not left long in disgrace. Though Coke had paid down handsomely, the Villiers family were anxious for Sir John to get some of his mother-in-law's great wealth, and that could only be obtained by kindness, for she was a strong-willed woman. So on the 1st of November, Buckingham, accompanied by the Marquis of Hamilton, Lord Compton, the gorgeous Hay, Sir Edward Cecil (now the Favourite's favourite), and many other gentlemen in twelve coaches went to fetch Lady Hatton from Sir William Craven's house, where she had been caged, and brought her to Cecil House in the Strand, after which she paid a visit to the Court, where the King gave her his hand in token of forgiveness, and reconciled her to the Queen. Then, playing the part of peacemaker, James patched

* Afterwards torn to pieces by the people in the streets of London.

up a truce between her and Lady Compton, and between the mother and her poor daughter Frances, who did not believe that she would be forgiven until the King made Lady Hatton swear that she loved her as dearly as ever she did in her life.

That night there was a great feast at Cecil House, where Buckingham and most of the lords about the Court were entertained; then a few days later Lady Hatton gave a magnificent banquet, at which the King was present, but not Coke her husband, whom she hated as much as ever, and who dined alone at the Temple near by.

"The King graced her in every way," writes Chamberlain to Carleton, "and made four of her creatures knights. . . . But the principal graces and favours lighted on the Lady Compton and her children, whom the King praised and kissed, and blessed all those that wished them well." In spite of all this reconciliation, however, Lady Hatton kept a tight hold on her money-bags. "She holds her hands," writes Chamberlain again, "and gives not her milk as freely as was expected, which in time may turn the wind about again." *

After the temporary quarrel between Bacon and Buckingham over the marriage of John Villiers there was a steady and intimate friendship between the Chancellor and the Favourite. Buckingham, though impetuous, and quick in anger when his personal interests were attacked, was not the giddy-pated fool that he has been described in too many histories, which colour their portraits crudely without any psychological discrimination. Bacon found him to be zealous and industrious in the King's service, disinterested in all matters of State which did not affect his personal position, and entirely without a corrupt love of gold, which had made most other favourites a curse to their country. He was glad of the wealth that had come to him, and used it magnificently, but at least he did not demand bribes for every service, and covet other men's money. The Lord Chancellor did not find him unworthy of his confidence in the most secret councils of the State, and he kept him closely informed, and condescended to ask his advice, upon all such high subjects. This was not due entirely to the Favourite's power of patronage. Bacon's ambitions naturally induced him to nurse the favour of the King's right hand, but his intellect

* "Court and Times of James I."

and his patriotism were too lofty to stoop, even for ambition's sake, to base fellows who would betray the interests of the Crown and country. It is therefore some guarantee of Buckingham's worthiness that the great Chancellor was, but for that one troublesome episode, his constant and cordial friend. Indeed in the mass of correspondence between these two great characters, which may still be read, there is something rather noble and elevating in the great courtesy and friendship which find expression in all the letters. Buckingham, it is true, was the man who gained most, though Bacon was not unrewarded for what he gave. The Favourite made use of the Chancellor's office, as the fountain-head of civil justice, to solicit his interest in causes relating to followers of the Villiers family, and Bacon seldom failed to give special attention to such requests. For this both have been severely censured. The enemies of Bacon have accused him of being influenced to pervert the course of justice by his sycophancy to the Favourite; and Buckingham, more often than Bacon, for he has had fewer friends, has been charged with attempts to corrupt the Chancellor in the interests of flatterers and hangers-on. Both accusations are unjust. There is no proof that Bacon ever pronounced an illegal judgment in any case brought forward by his friend, though in some cases he saw fit to revise a decision previously given; and if one patiently reads through the great number of letters which Buckingham wrote on such matters (mainly uninteresting save as an indication of the writer's character), an unprejudiced mind must admit that he did not ask for dishonest interest, but placed his suit always under the Chancellor's just ruling.

One or two such letters may suffice to indicate their general tenor. Writing on the 28th of January, 1617, Buckingham says—

“MY HONOURABLE LORD,

“I have been entreated by a gentleman whom I much respect to recommend to your Lordship's favour Mr. John Huddy, between whom and Mr. Richard Huddy there is, as I am informed, a cause to be heard before your Lordship in the Chancery on Saturday next. My desire unto your Lordship is that you would shew the said John Huddy what favour you lawfully may and as his cause will bear when it cometh before

you for my sake, which I will not fail to acknowledge, ever resting,

“Your Lordship’s faithful servant,
“G. BUCKINGHAM”

On the last day of January Buckingham writes from Newmarket—

“MY HONOURABLE LORD,

“I have received your Lordship’s letters, wherein I see the continuance of your love and respect to me in any thing I write to you of, for which I give your Lordship many thanks, desiring nothing for any man but what you shall find just and convenient to pass. I am very glad to understand that there is so good hope of Sir Gilbert Houghton’s business, which I must needs ascribe to your Lordship’s great favour toward him for my sake which I will ever acknowledge. If his Majesty at any time speak of the Lord Clifton’s business, I will answer according to that your Lordship hath written. I understand by Jack Butler how bountiful your Lordship hath been to him, for which I thank your Lordship, he being brother to my sister’s husband, and besides I account your favour placed upon a thankful youth who speaketh of it to all his friends, which I take well in him that will not smother the benefits bestowed upon him.

“I am sorry your Lordship maketh an apology for using the liberty (upon such a necessary occasion) of another’s hand, which I so often take by reason of my little leisure, and desire your Lordship hereafter to spare yourself more, without tying yourself to that ceremony which I so little deserve.”

In nearly all letters written by Buckingham in this strain he asks for the Chancellor’s interest on behalf of plaintiffs, “so far only as the justice of the cause shall require,” or as it may be “grounded on equity and reason.” There is, therefore, no reason to charge Buckingham with using his influence for dishonest purposes. The letters, indeed, leave one with an impression of Buckingham’s remarkable kindness and generosity. It was no doubt partly through vanity and love of power that he interested himself in the fortunes of all sorts and conditions of people, but it was vanity redeemed by a good heart. Among

those whose cases he desired to help were such persons as "a merchant of London of whom I have heard a good report ;" two quarrelling brothers Egerton, "whose name and blood should tie together and keep in unity ;" one of the King's grooms, "to whom I wish very well ;" a poor gentlewoman, whose case "deserveth in all appearance much commiseration ;" "two of his Highness's servants, whom he loveth, and whom I wish very well to ;" and "the distress'd case of Lady Martin . . . her poverty being such that having nothing to live on but her husband's debts, if her suit long depend, she shall be enforced to lose her cause for want of means to follow it." *

These few extracts out of a great correspondence (which proves that Buckingham was no mere idler) was sufficient to show that the Favourite's influence with Bacon was used to promote the interests of many people, from whom Buckingham himself could hope to receive nothing but gratitude.

On the 27th October, 1617, shortly before the release of Lady Hatton, Sir Ralph Winwood died, and was buried with much solemn pomp, sincerely mourned by the King, to whom he had been a faithful servant, and by Buckingham, to whom he had been a useful friend. It was, it will be remembered, by his enmity to the Earl of Somerset that the Overbury crime was first dragged to light, and after the ruin of that favourite, which led to the immediate advance of George Villiers, he had had some influence over the new man. A hearty hater of Spain, he had been partly instrumental in gaining Raleigh's release for a voyage which was to end in a disaster, and for his own sake his death perhaps was timely in saving him from sharing Raleigh's final downfall.

Some reference must be made to this great tragedy, for Buckingham himself had some share in it, and unfortunately an ignoble share. Raleigh had been in the Tower for eleven years after his reprieve from the scaffold, for alleged complicity in the plot to put Arabella Stuart upon the throne, after the death of Elizabeth. "No man but my father," said Prince Henry, who often visited this great Elizabethan, "would keep such a bird in a cage." There he would have pined, no doubt, until his bold and soaring spirit was released at last by death from prison bars, had it not been for the emptiness of the King's

* "Letters and Life of Francis Bacon," by James Spedding.

Treasury, which made James give ear to any scheme for its replenishment. Raleigh, panting for liberty, yearning to breathe once more the salt air of the open sea, to sail out towards the sun, with a good ship beneath him, on one of those great adventures which were now but dreams and memories of his golden age, had such a scheme, wild and fantastic as we now know, but not incredible to men who remembered the voyage of the *Golden Hind*. In 1595 he had sailed up the Orinoco river, finding auriferous quartz and strange glittering stones, and hearing marvellous stories from native Indians of a city of shining gold, and of a rich territory of gold-mines, called El Dorado. He had not succeeded in reaching this region of untold wealth, but he had seen enough to write his "Discovery of the large, rich and beautiful Empire of Guiana." Now in prison he dreams of El Dorado, and through Sir Ralph Winwood, who hated Spain, he endeavoured to regain his freedom, for a last desperate venture, by dazzling the mind of James with "the glamour of such visions of inexhaustible gold." Villiers at this time was not on the side of the Spanish party, and, inspired by Winwood, he used his influence with the King for Raleigh's release. Greatly tempted, but not without misgivings, James allowed himself to be persuaded, and upon the condition, the obviously impossible condition, that Raleigh was not to molest the dominion of the King of Spain, the great seaman left his lodgings in the Tower for his last voyage; a man with a sentence of death still hanging over his head, and knowing that his life would be the forfeit of failure, but inspired with a desperate hope of success, for which he was ready to dare all things. So in April of 1617 he set sail with a small fleet, manned by some forty gentlemen, and a crew of "the very scum of the world, drunkards and blasphemers," for the great traditions of English seamanship had expired, and Raleigh had stepped out of his prison into a different England.

He had not sailed before James was scared by his consent to this adventure. To the Spanish Ambassador, Count Gondomar, he confessed the object of the voyage, and was bullied by that bold little diplomatist until he trembled before the wrath of Spain. From bullying, Gondomar turned to cajolery, and while Raleigh was sailing westward, the King was induced to believe that an alliance with Spain by means of a match between

his son and the Infanta would be the easiest means of replenishing his treasury. George Villiers was also ensnared by the wily ambassador, and was drawn over to this notion of a Spanish alliance.

So fortune played against Sir Walter Raleigh, and he sailed to his doom. His secret object had been revealed to his enemies, and when he reached the coast of Guiana, the Spanish Settlements were prepared for his coming. From the first disaster dogged him. His ships were battered by storms, his crews were mutinous, he himself, the soul of this adventure, was stricken down by sickness, and had to entrust the command of the inland expedition to Captain Keymis and his own son, young Walter Raleigh. Fresh tragedies followed. Falling in with a Spanish town, called San Thomé, they attacked it and burnt it. In the fight Raleigh's son was killed, the men got out of hand, and when Keymis returned to his admiral with the news of young Raleigh's tragic fate, and of his failure to find the mines, he was so stricken to the heart by the bitter reproaches of his old chief that he stabbed himself to death. Raleigh, sick in mind and body, endeavoured to lead his men forward again towards the mythical El Dorado, but they had had enough of pestilent swamps and Spanish guns, and refused stubbornly to follow. Then, utterly reckless, Sir Walter bade his men do as Drake's brave fellows had done, to their great glory and good, and to attack the Mexican fleet of plate-ships. This enterprise failed also, for the enemy's fleet had heard rumours of Raleigh's intention, and slipped past him to a safe port. Then a storm arose, scattering and wrecking the English vessels.

Raleigh came home to Plymouth, knowing that the breeze which filled the sails of the only ship left to him was bearing him steadily to his death. His own kinsman, Sir Lewis Stukely, ever afterwards scorned of men by the name of Sir "Judas" Stukely, was sent down to arrest him and bring him up to London. He endeavoured to escape to France, but spies betrayed him. Then he feigned illness, or rather made himself ill by taking some irritant poison. When at last he was brought to the Tower again his great mind was for a time unbalanced, and he said foolish and contradictory things to the spy which James, with infamous craft, sent down to win his confidence. The Lord Chancellor Bacon, Archbishop Abbot, and Lord Chief

Justice Coke, examined him formally and advised the King against bringing him to a new trial, as the sentence of death passed upon him in 1605 was still unrepealed, and could now be executed.

Count Gondomar, the Spanish ambassador, was loud in his demands for vengeance, and declared that he should be sent to Madrid, there to be tried and killed as a pirate. To the disgrace of George Villiers, who was now heart and soul with Gondomar, he raised his voice to support this outrageous proposition. It is the meanest thing in his life, the only mean and really ungenerous and poor-spirited act of which he may be convicted. One cannot help feeling surprised and disappointed that a man of adventurous instinct as he was should not have been moved by a generous compassion and sympathy for the great Elizabethan seaman and gallant gentleman, who had staked his life upon a desperate venture and failed. Raleigh was guilty, it is true, of making war upon the possessions of a friendly power, and from the standpoint of modern international law he cannot be defended. But it was not for Villiers to be pedantic on the punctilio of such an adventure, which had been encouraged by him at the beginning, though he knew as well as Raleigh himself, and as well as the King, who was not blind, that it would inevitably lead to a conflict with the Spanish colonies.

The Queen, who had more compassion for Raleigh, wrote a letter on behalf of the unfortunate man, which does credit to her heart, and is another proof of the extraordinary power of Buckingham at Court, the Queen acknowledging that he had more influence with the King than she, his consort.

"ANNE R.

"MY KIND DOG,

"If I have any power or credit with you, I pray you let me have a triall of it at this time, in dealing sincerely and earnestly with the King, that Sir Walter Raleigh's life may not be called in question. If you do it so that y' success answer my expectation, assure yourself that I will take it extraordinarily kindly at your hands, and rest one that wisheth you well, and desires you to continue still, as you have been, a true servant to your master.

"To the Marquiss of Buckingham"

There is no evidence that Villiers was moved by this appeal from Queen Anne, and it is clear that he did not raise one word to save from the block the noble white head of a man who, with all his faults, was one of the most heroic figures in our history, and who now, abandoned by his King and country, died with the cheerful gallantry of a great gentleman.

Winwood's death and Gondomar's influence completely alienated Buckingham from Elizabethan traditions, and from that time George was drawn into the schemes of those who favoured a Spanish alliance. Winwood's death had another result upon the fortunes of the Favourite. No successor was appointed to his office for a time, and Buckingham became more closely associated with our foreign policy.

"The King," writes Chamberlain at this time, "said he was never so well served as when he was his own secretary, and to that end had delivered the seals that were belonging to Sir Ralph Winwood to the custody of the Earl of Buckingham, and there perhaps they shall remain till they both grow weary of the trouble."

When they did grow weary Naunton was made secretary, a man of mediocre ability and insignificant character.

Power was thrust into the hands of Buckingham, with little trouble on his part to acquire it, and in this way fortune was so extraordinarily on his side that he has been given more credit for subtle diplomacy than is his due.

Great as he was at Court at this time, he had now many influential enemies, among whom the Howard family were the leaders of a hostile faction. They still held high office, the Duke of Suffolk as Lord Treasurer, the Earl of Nottingham as Lord High Admiral, Sir Thomas Lake, one of their kinsmen (who had first befriended Buckingham), as a Secretary of State. But now, in 1618, they were swept, one after another, off the stage on which they had played great, but not noble, parts.

They made one desperate bid to put down the Favourite by bringing to Court a young man named Monson, whom they hoped would attract the King's eyes, as Buckingham's youthful beauty had done. Monson was a son of that Sir Thomas Monson who had been accused of complicity in the murder of Overbury, and was a creature of vile character. But he had good looks, and the Howards, who set him up as a new idol,

"took great pains in tricking and pranking him up, besides washing his face every day with posset-curd." * But the plot failed dismally. The King sent him a message that he did not like this forwardness 'in presenting himself continually about him, and that his father and uncle were not long since called in question for matters of no small moment, his own education with such persons being a cause of suspicion, "wherefore," said the Lord Chamberlain, who delivered this blunt reproof, "his majesty willed him from henceforth to forbear his presence ; and if he would follow his advice, he should likewise forbear the court."

This was a shrewd blow to the hopes of the Howards, and the King showed his continued affection for Buckingham by granting him the lease of the Irish customs, which increased his fortune by at least £2000 a year out of the surplus of the profits. In a more dramatic way than this James did honour to George Villiers and his family. A quarrel on some trivial cause had taken place between "Steenie and Baby Charles" (as the King called these two young men) in the tennis court, and the Favourite had actually lost his temper so much as to hit, or threaten to hit, his prince over the head with a tennis racket. Any other man but Buckingham would have been sent to the Tower for such insolence, but James, like a fond father, made peace between his two "sweete boyes." In token of reconciliation Buckingham entertained the King and Charles to a magnificent banquet at Wanstead, on a new estate of great value, which had recently been given to him by James in exchange for land of much inferior worth. It was called "The Friends' Feast," and in the same room where the King and the Prince dined was another board for the lords and ladies, among whom were the Favourite's mother, Lady Compton ; his sister Susan, who had lately married Sir William Fielding, afterwards Earl of Denbigh ; his brother John and his newly married wife ; Lady Hatton, now on terms of truce with the Villiers family, and other members of that race. The King honoured the Favourite's people by drinking to them, not in the bulk, but one after another. Then, with a secret message to Steenie, after the dinner he rose and came to their table "and drank a common health to all the noble family, which he professed he desired to advance

* Chamberlain to Carleton.

above all things. . . . As for myself," he said, "I live to that end." Then, as if that were not enough, he assured this family of similar favour from his successors, whom he charged to so far regard his commandments as to advance that house above all others whatsoever.*

To the Howards the news of the feast was ominous. It was followed by the creation of Lady Compton as Countess of Buckingham in her own right, and apart from her husband, who remained "a bare knight," to the great perplexity of the heralds.

But on the 12th of July, 1618, the heaviest blow fell upon the Howard faction. The Earl of Suffolk, Lord Treasurer, was removed from his office, with an accusation against him and his wife of corrupt practices, his sub-treasurer, Sir John Bingley, being at the same time sent to prison. It has often been asserted, and is popularly believed, that the Earl's removal was due to the malignant rivalry of the Favourite; but such an authority as Spedding, the editor of Bacon's "Life and Letters," fails to find any evidence worth mentioning that Buckingham took any part in the matter, and is content to believe that Suffolk was dismissed from his place because he had been detected in practices which proved that he was unfit to hold it any longer, and that he acquiesced because he had no justification to offer.

Thomas Howard was a man of many great qualities. In Elizabeth's reign he had served his country with great honour, taking a gallant part in the heroic fight against the Spanish Armada, and afterwards leading the attack on the Azores fleet, and commanding the third squadron in the Cadiz expedition. James, who had a personal affection for him, appointed him Lord Chamberlain in 1603, and Lord Treasurer in 1614. His greatest faults were prodigal extravagances, an utter carelessness of his great duties towards the national exchequer, and an easy conscience in money matters which led him to accept bribes, and to overlook the corrupt practices of his subordinate officials. He was also in the hands of an ambitious and unscrupulous wife, who used her influence over him to sell places and privileges in return for "presents," which swelled her great fortune. Such moral looseness in the highest position of the State was an influence of profoundly evil consequences

* Letter from the Rev. Thomas Lorkin to Sir Thomas Puckering, Bart.

throughout the whole of the Civil Service, and to Suffolk's weakness, criminal in effect, though not in ambition, was largely due the corruption which infected the Court officials like an unholy plague.

Buckingham could not have been quite sorry to see the downfall of a man who had always led a hostile faction against him, but at least he behaved like a gentleman to his enemy, and there is no spirit of triumph or contempt in a letter which he wrote to the Earl, giving him private news of the proceedings to be taken against him. This letter was found among the Fortescue Papers, and printed by Mr. Gardiner for the Camden Society. It certainly shows Buckingham in a favourable light towards his great rival :—

“The care I have to acquit myself according to the profession of friendship toward your Lp. makes me acquaint you at this time with something that fell out concerning you in the time of his M.'s last being at Whitehall. Some two days before his remove from thence, the Lords and other Commissioners for enquiry touching the mis-spending of his treasure repaired to his M. and gave him an account of all their labours, and amongst the rest what they had found against your Lp. and your wife, and in conclusion did all upon their knees beseech his M. to be pleased that both your Lp. and your wife together with Sir John Bingley might be called to the Star-chamber, there to be censured for your misdemeanours in your office. The reasons for which they moved his M. to yeild to this order were two : first for his M.'s own honour who could not otherwise be cleared except by such a public and legal course in regard of his taking the staff from you, and for stopping the mouths of those that reported that your Lp.'s office was taken from you not upon just grounds but only by the partiality of a Court faction. The other reason was that by this legal and public proceeding there might an example be made for securing his M. and his posterity from being ill-served by any that shall exercise that place hereafter. But though his M. (as himself told me soon after) disputed with them that it had been for his M. honour to grant you first a hearing upon all the points that you were to be charged with before a certain number of Lords before the time that you should be brought to any public trial, his M. alleging

that many things might appear fouler to them than peradventure they would prove when you should be heard to answer for yourself, and that upon your answer his M. might best discern whether your offences were of so high a nature or not as to make you to be brought to a public trial, yet they all in one voice insisted on the former suit, affirming that to give you first a more private hearing was against all custom in such cases, and that you could object no material thing against that that was to be laid to your charge, because you were accused of nothing that was not proved by oath of divers witnesses and altogether undeniable. So, as though his M., as every one knows, be merciful in his own nature, yet could he not resist this their suit, specially they adding to the former reasons, that the burden would be upon them as upon partial surmisers and promoters, if the verity of this their cause were not once publicly cleared, leaving it then to his M.'s mercy to pardon and spare as should please him.

"I confess my Lord I wish I could acquaint you with better news, but the sooner you be informed of the truth you may the better prepare for it, and bethink you what you would have his M. moved in, and how far; assuring you that I shall ever faithfully represent to his M. what your Lp. shall be pleased to employ me in.

"As to the expiring of their commission it is now expired for so much as may have reference to your Lp. but in some other things which do very much import to his M. service they do yet go on. This my private advertisement to your Lp. I wish may be kept secret to yourself, for I assure you upon my honour never one of my fellow Councillors knows of this letter nor of my acquainting your Lp. privately any ways of this purpose. And so I rest,

"G. B."

This charge against the Suffolks and Sir John Bingley dragged on for many months before being decided, and during that time the Queen, who had been suffering from dropsy, died on the 2nd of March, 1619. After her funeral, which Chamberlain describes as "but a drawling tedious sight more remarkable for number than for any other singularity," her jewels were brought to the King at Greenwich in four carts full of trunks



QUEEN ANNE, CONSORT OF JAMES I

FROM THE PAINTING BY PAUL VAN SOMER IN THE NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY

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ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS

and cabinets. James pawed over these properties of his dead wife, and bestowed "a reasonable proportion" of them on Buckingham, who had a passion for such glittering gems. He also gave him the tenancy of Denmark House in the Strand, where the Queen had lived during her last years, and another gift of £1200 in land. These splendid presents were in recognition of the Favourite's tenderness in the King's recent illness, when James himself had been brought very near to death.

Correspondence passed continually between the Lord Chancellor Bacon and the King's Favourite on the progress of the Suffolk's trial, and at last, on the 13th of November, 1619, Buckingham was informed by his friend that sentence had been passed upon the great lord who had held the Treasurer's white staff, and upon his wife and subordinate officer, Sir John Bingley. "My Lord and Lady," writes Bacon, "are fined together at £30,000, with imprisonment in the Tower at their own charges; Bingley at £2000, and committed to the Fleet." In justice to Buckingham it must be said that he did not gloat over the downfall of his old antagonist, and that it was by his friendly interest that Suffolk's punishment was partly remitted, and that though deprived of office he was restored to Royal favour.

Before this sentence was passed another and less important member of the Howard party had fallen low, not through any malevolence or strategy of George Villiers (though he was the gainer), but owing to the folly of the man himself. This was Sir Thomas Lake, one of the Secretaries of State, who had been one of the greatest toadies of the Howards, and a paid servant of Spain. He had got into great trouble with the King for repeating some of His Majesty's hot words against the Countess of Suffolk to that Lady's husband before the Earl's indictment in the Star Chamber. Throwing himself on his knees before the Favourite, he had offered him a bribe of £15,000 to be restored to favour. Buckingham spurned him, but Lake then appealed to the Favourite's lady mother, and there is reason to believe that she was not so scrupulous, and pocketing the money, induced her son to listen to the Secretary's apology.

But a heavier blow now fell on the wretched man, and the story of his final disgrace is one of those scandals which unhappily stain the annals of this reign. His daughter had married the

young nobleman, Lord Roos, grandson and heir of the Earl of Exeter. The marriage was disastrous, and the wife, who was, according to all evidence, a woman of evil and malicious mind, hated her husband. A frightful quarrel broke out between the Lakes and Lord Roos's side of the family, the cause being a dispute over the marriage settlements. The young husband was so terrorized by his wife, and by Sir Thomas and Lady Lake, who threatened to divorce him on a scandalous charge, that he actually fled from the country and took refuge in Rome. But the venom of the Lakes was now turned upon the old Earl of Exeter and his beautiful young wife, who had interfered in the business affairs of the exiled husband. Lady Roos circulated a slander that her young lord had had guilty relations with his grandfather's Countess, and then, excited by a spirit of evil, dared to accuse that lady of having attempted to poison her in order to hide her own guilt. Such an accusation could not be passed, and Lady Exeter appealed to the Star Chamber. The noise of the scandal burst upon the Court, so that nothing else was discussed, and the King himself was determined to investigate the truth. The Lakes now made desperate efforts to produce evidence in support of their daughter's tale, and Sir Thomas Lake himself actually imprisoned two men who refused to give false witness. Lady Roos adopted still more criminal means to support her case. She forged a document purporting to be a signed confession by Lady Exeter, and brought forward a maid named Sarah Swarton to swear that she had been concealed behind the hangings at Lady Exeter's house at Wimbledon when the Countess acknowledged her guilt. All this evidence was proved to be entirely without foundation, and the last story by Sarah Swarton was shattered by the ingenuity of James himself. He rode over with the waiting woman to Wimbledon and made her stand in the place she had described. To her dismay it was found that the tapestries did not hang down below her knees! The alleged confession could not possibly have been made in the full view of Sarah Swarton's legs. The end of the case was that Sir Thomas and Lady Lake, and their daughter Lady Roos, were condemned to a heavy fine and imprisonment during the King's pleasure, while Sarah Swarton was to be whipped and branded. Confessions and repentance which followed the judgment mitigated the punishments, but

Sir Thomas Lake did not recover his office, and Sir George Calvert, a quiet plodding man, honest and without vaulting ambitions, and a friend of Buckingham's, became Secretary in his stead.

The rest of the Howards and their dependants were not yet cleared out. The Lord High Admiral of England was Charles Howard, Earl of Nottingham. Like Suffolk, his kinsman, he was utterly without business instincts and a conscience for money matters, which, after all, more than all lofty ideals, are the first principles of true patriotism to those who have charge of the great departments of State. Under his administration the Admiralty was seething with corruption, and the Navy was rotting away. Enormous sums of money allotted from the Treasury for the purposes of harbour works and naval repairs went into the pockets of villainous contractors, and still more villainous officials. It was such a notorious scandal that the King himself was determined to institute reforms, and a commission was appointed to investigate the administration.

The most important member of the commission was Lionel Cranfield, a man of humble birth, but of remarkable business genius, who had already proved himself a born economist. He began life as an apprentice in the city, and like many other London apprentices, owed his first rise to a marriage with his master's daughter. He founded a substantial fortune as a merchant, and then, brought to the notice of the Court by the Earl of Northampton, he was appointed Surveyor General of the Customs in 1618. His business training stood him in good stead in this place. His one purpose in life now was to save the King from being cheated by the swarm of rogues and swindlers who fattened on the Royal Treasury, and enriched themselves by every trick of corruption at the expense of national efficiency. With Cranfield in charge of the accounts, these parasites found a master whose shrewd eyes scanned every figure, and whose honesty was unassailable. He effected enormous economies, and by checking the scandalous perquisites of the officials, made an annual saving of £23,000. For these services he was knighted, and now as a member of the Navy Commission he helped to reveal the appalling waste and inefficiency of the Admiralty. When the Report was presented there was only one thing to do. The Earl of Nottingham must go. Buckingham was

offered the place of Lord High Admiral, but with a modesty which is rather startling, refused at first to accept the honour, pleading his youth and inexperience. Then the King suggested a compromise—that the Favourite should be associated with the Earl of Nottingham at the head of the Admiralty. But Nottingham himself played into the hands of his rival. His pride was stung, and refusing to share his office, he sent in his resignation. The King accepted it, but solaced the Earl by a pension of £1000 a year, and Buckingham, as a token of his own good will, sent him a present of £3000. The Favourite was now formally installed as Lord High Admiral of England, with Sir Lionel Cranfield as his right-hand man.

But Cranfield, who was a wealthy man and now a widower, was not allowed to rise without payment. The Countess of Buckingham, George's mother, thought him an eligible *parti* for her pretty cousin, Anne Brett. Cranfield for a time resisted the suggestion because he was seriously enamoured with Lady Howard of Effingham, the widow of the late Lord Admiral's eldest son. Apart from the question of Mistress Brett, the idea of such a marriage with one of the Howards was seriously displeasing to Buckingham, and Cranfield was clearly given to understand that he would forfeit his patron's favour if he resisted the proposal and honour of an alliance with the Villiers family. Cranfield was too prudent to be desperate in love, and realizing, as Bacon had done, that Buckingham was most dangerous when his family pride was touched, he gave his hand and fortune to Mistress Anne.

To Buckingham he was a faithful servant, and in many letters addressed to the Favourite as Lord High Admiral we may see how his consummate mastery over all details of business, his absolute honesty, and his ceaseless industry, reformed the administration of the Admiralty as he had already reformed the King's household, in a spirit of true economy. Buckingham gained the credit, and though the actual work was done by others, the Favourite being perfectly ready to give over all details into the hands of his subordinates provided he received the honour, some share of credit is justly due to him in being on the side of economy and efficiency. Even Gardiner, who usually takes a very severe view of Buckingham's character, does not spare a few words of praise for him during this period

of his life: "The Household, the Treasury, the Wardrobe, and the Admiralty had been subjected to sweeping and beneficial reforms. Everywhere retrenchment had been carried out under the influence and with the co-operation of Buckingham." *

These words by his sternest judge are comforting to those who are attracted by the many charming and generous qualities of the man, without being blind to his faults. The student of this brilliant career must also take into account the enormous temptations that surrounded him, temptations by which even the strongest and noblest character might have been reduced. Raised quickly to his most dizzy height of power without any of that painful probation, that slow apprenticeship, that self-discipline and accumulated experience by which most men gain the prizes of life, Villiers, still a young man, and with impetuous blood, was an uncrowned king, holding at his disposal the King's gifts of places and patronage, yet unbound by the responsibilities, and untaught in the traditions, of kingship. His enemies had been scattered before him. The Howards, greatest in rank and pride and power, and his most formidable rivals, had by their own follies been swept from his path, and he strode forward in dazzling magnificence, unopposed and unassailable. Conscious that he was an adventurer, whose uplifting, above all hereditary rank and wealth, had depended solely upon his personal charms, he may well have been amazed by this prodigious power of his own personality, and done homage to his own person. His nature tempted him into excess of vanity. His position tempted him to pride and absolute egoism. His place at the King's right hand, as the acknowledged patron through whom all office and gifts could alone be gained, was a continual temptation of quite devilish ingenuity for the destruction of a weak man's soul. So many of his predecessors had succumbed. Men whose training should have fitted them to fill high offices with clean hands, had dipped them deep in the slime of corruption. Great lords, not created suddenly by the smile of a doting King, but born to their places, and with a long roll-call of noble names behind them, had had their sense of honour soiled and debased, taking and not resisting their opportunities for venal sin. Yet George Villiers, the young adventurer, this light butterfly of court sunshine, put those

* "History of England," vol. iii. p. 207.

other men to shame. The temptation of vanity he could not thrust back. It took possession of his blood and brain, and the homage given to his charms and splendour was as the breath of his nostrils. But, at least, he avoided and was not overpowered by the stench of corruption and the hypnotizing influence of bribe-money which had been the curse of King James's Court. His house was besieged by flatterers, and he sunned himself in their flattery, but did not take their gold. They were eager to pay their way, believing it to be the only way, to coveted places. He used his influence on their behalf, and startled them by taking no wages. Sometimes, it is true, his influence was used for unworthy creatures. Two men, Heath and Shute, whom he foisted into legal offices, with a determination that tore down all opposition, were notorious scoundrels, so that James himself protested against their appointments. Yet even in such cases as this his vanity was at fault, and he was not venal. And, on the whole, his favours were given to good men. Cranfield, with whom he had nothing in common, was the right man in the right place, and if Villiers himself did nothing worthy of the name of statesmanship or state economy, at least he encouraged honest service, and was on the side of economy, efficiency, and reform. For a man of his temperament and position, that was both remarkable and admirable, and remembering how easily he might have plunged deep into infamy, how many thousand chances there were that a Favourite should enrich himself illegally, beyond all the gifts of his master, we can, without exalting him with heroic virtue, give a great measure of credit to "dogge Steenie."

CHAPTER IV

BUCKINGHAM'S HOME LIFE

WE have seen how when George Villiers came to Court he quickly became enamoured of the daughter of Sir Roger Aston, Master of the Robes, but was persuaded to leave the lady whose fortune was then as insubstantial as his own, which rested only on good hopes. If it were necessary to make Villiers a hero, that would be a blow to his gallantry in ladies' eyes, who can pardon many things save infidelity in love. But Villiers was no hero, and whitewash would never make him one. It is more than probable that Sir Roger's daughter was not the only one to attract his bold eyes, which, if we may believe all tales, roved wantonly among the ladies of King James's Court. Arthur Wilson must always be suspected as a scavenger of scandal, but there is, in all likelihood, some truth in his accusation against the Favourite regarding his relations with women.

"For the Marquess himself," he says, "as he was a man of excellent symmetry and proportion of parts, so he affected beauty where he found it ; but yet he looks upon the whole race of women as inferior things, and uses them as if the sex were one ; best pleased with all : and if his eyes call'd out a wanton beauty he had his Setter that could spread his Nets and point a meeting at some Ladie's House where he should come (as by accident) and find accesses while all his Train attended at the door as if it were an honourable visit."

The morality of the time was so loose in this respect that men, otherwise of the noblest character, allowed themselves a large license in amorous adventures. Pembroke, acknowledged by all his contemporaries as the greatest of English gentlemen, was very guilty towards women, and Arundel, Oxford, Hay,

and the best gentlemen of the Court, were all too easily made captive by languishing glances, and too careless of the sanctity of womanhood.

If Villiers sinned—and the woman who was afterwards his wife protested sadly that he loved other women too well—he was not worse than most men of his rank and time. This does not give him absolution, but to be fair to any historical characters it is necessary to get back to the prevailing code of morals under which they lived. One cannot judge the Court of James by the standard of the London County Council.

It was good for George Villiers that, six years after his coming to Court, he married a pure and noble-hearted woman, who sweetened his life, and gave some stability to his errant nature by tender domestic ties. Doubtless in his first proposals for the hand of Katharine Manners, daughter of the Earl of Rutland, George was moved mainly by ambition. Of romantic love there was more than enough in the days of the Stuarts, but it was kept generally for light adventures, and marriage itself was in most cases a matter of strict business, in which there was weighing of money-bags on both sides, and much haggling over the body of the bride. Villiers, as the King's Favourite, desired a wealthy wife, and Katharine was the richest heiress in the country. But with this inducement it is not difficult for a man of heart to love a beautiful and sweet-natured girl, and there is not a shadow of doubt that after the wedding, if not before, the Earl of Buckingham had a very ardent affection for the Lady Kate. She, poor girl, was, it seems, desperately in love with this handsome gentleman as soon as he came courting her—so much in love that she was ready to brave the anger of her father, and, what must have been more terrible to her, to give up communion with the Catholic Church, in order to gain this splendid fellow, who was so shining in his beauty and magnificence, and whose words were so winning and so melting to a maid's heart.

The course of love was not smooth. The Earl of Rutland did not favour my lord of Buckingham. The Manners family was of long ancestry, and their wealth was prodigious. This Villiers, though there was nothing to say against his name, must have seemed to the proud earl an upstart fellow, and an adventurer raised by a king's folly to a height from which he

might topple as suddenly. Above all, he was not of the old faith, and the Rutlands were staunch in their allegiance to the Catholic Church.

This was a difficulty. Villiers himself had no natural or intellectual prejudice against the Catholic faith. There were times in his life when it seems that he was drawn towards it, for in its ritual and poetry and colour there was an appeal to a man of his imaginative temperament, who was untouched by the colder dogma of Protestantism, but, in some moods, might at a burning word have gone down on his knees at the foot of the Cross and prayed for strength against the weakness of his flesh. He had such moments of self-abasement, so Bishop Goodman says. But James, though very complaisant in many things, had certain fixed principles which he held to with absolute conviction beyond argument or persuasion. He was the head of the English Church, and though for State reasons he was willing to favour the marriage of his son upon certain conditions to a Catholic princess, desiring by this means to bring peace to Europe, and, as a selfish motive, to replenish an exhausted treasury, he was stubborn in his refusal to permit his Favourite, who had no such reasons of State expediency, to give his hand to a lady of a faith which was a penal offence in English law.

So there was a deadlock. The Earl of Rutland was a stubborn "recusant," and refused Buckingham's suit for his daughter's hand, and Buckingham dared not thwart his master so flagrantly.

But there was a friend of the Favourite who, believing in his powers of persuasion, saw a great opportunity for advancement under Buckingham's powerful patronage by breaking down the obstacles in the way of this marriage. This was John Williams, Dean of Salisbury, and afterwards of Westminster, and then, getting his reward, Bishop of Lincoln and Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal. He was a man of smooth tongue and diplomatic ability, a courtier by instinct and natural gifts, and in religious temperament what would now be called a Broad Churchman, not believing overmuch in set forms of dogma, but anxious to conciliate the Catholics on the one hand, and the Puritans on the other, by finding a middle way and a doctrinal compromise. Gardiner is severe with him, and calls him of the earth, earthy.

"The existence of any firm belief, either religious or political, was altogether incomprehensible to him, and, after years of experience, he dashed himself to pieces against the persistent single-mindedness of Laud, and the no less persistent single-mindedness of the Puritans of the Long Parliament, as a bird dashes itself against a window-pane from very ignorance that it is there." Perhaps, on the other hand, in his principles of toleration he was in advance of his age.

Using his friendship with the Earl of Rutland to confer privately with his daughter, he used many subtle arguments to seduce the Lady Katharine from the faith in which she had been brought up. He pointed out how in all cardinal foundations of belief there was no great difference between the Roman and the English Church, how beautiful was the English Catechism, how very excellent and reasonable the marriage service. We do not know how far these arguments really prevailed with Katharine Manners, but love was stronger than theology. Then the Earl of Rutland, by his own impetuous temper, and by a violence of anger, played into the hands of Buckingham. Deeply annoyed at the possibility of his daughter changing her faith, he came home one day to find that she had left the house in the morning with the Countess of Buckingham, and had not returned at night. Black suspicion brooded in his heart. It seemed to the Earl that attempts had been made not only to pervert Katharine's faith, but that she had been tempted to sacrifice her honour. Buckingham's reputation was an enemy to him, and the Earl of Rutland might well think that such an adventurer would stop at nothing to satisfy his passionate, as well as his pecuniary, desires. The truth was that Katharine had been taken ill, and had been kept by Lady Buckingham in her own rooms. But the father, maddened at what he thought was his daughter's dishonour, listened to no arguments, refused to take Katharine back again, and vented a violent storm of abuse upon Buckingham's head. A duel was only averted by the intervention of the Prince of Wales. Then, in a cooler temper outwardly, though still seething with anger, Rutland wrote a letter to Buckingham, in which he said that he would forgive what had happened if he could be assured that his daughter's honour would be safe, for, he said, "although she deserves not so great a care from a father whom she so little

esteems, yet I must preserve her honour, if it were with hazard of my life." *

Then he laid down his conditions for forgiveness—

"The issue I require, which your lordship desires to know, is that I may by some course be assured she is yours, and then you shall find me tractable to deal like a loving father; although she is not worthy in respect of her neglect to me, yet it being once done, her love and due respects to your lordship shall make me forget that which I confess I am now too sensible of; and I hope your lordship will not guess nor imagine of me other than as one that, if it be not your fault, you have as great an interest in as in any man, and she shall not make her yours sooner than I will receive her again. To conclude, my lord, this is my resolution: if my conscience may not be fully satisfied she is yours, take your own courses: I must take mine, and I hope I shall arm myself with patience, and not with rage. Your lordship shall ever find I will be as careful of your own honour as I must be tender of mine own."

Buckingham was not the man to read such a letter patiently. The hot-tempered Earl, unjustly suspicious of both his daughter's and her lover's honour, put himself into a ridiculous position, and Buckingham answered him with haughty indifference threatening him with the very thing he most dreaded, the abandonment of his daughter.

"MY LORD" (he wrote),

"Your mistaking in your fashion of dealing with a free and honest heart, together with your froward carriage towards your own daughter, enforced me the other day to post to Hampton Court, and then cast myself at his Majesty's feet, confessing freely unto him all that ever hath passed in privacy between your lordship and me concerning your daughter's marriage, lest otherwise by this your public miscarriage of the business it might by other means to my disadvantage 'a come to his knowledge. And now that I have obtained my master's pardon, for this my first fault, by concealing and going further in any thing than his Majesty was acquainted with, I can delay no longer of declaring unto you how unkindly I take your harsh usage of me and your daughter, which hath wrought

* Bishop Goodman's "Memoirs."

this effect in me ; that, since you esteem so little of my friendship and her honor, I must now, contrary to my former resolution, leave off the pursuit of that alliance any more, putting it in your free choice to bestow her elsewhere to your best comfort ; for whose fortune it shall ever be to have her, I will constantly propose that she never received any blemish in her honor but that which came by your own tongue. It is true I never thought before to have seen the time that I should need to come within the compass of the law by stealing of a wife against the consent of the parents ; considering of the favor that it pleaseth his Majesty, though undeservedly, to bestow upon me. So, leaving this to you and your wife's censure, I rest,

“ Your lordship's servant,

“ G. BUCKINGHAM ” *

To the King Buckingham made a jest of the whole matter, and he could afford to do so, however seriously he had set his heart on Katharine Manners, because the Earl of Rutland by his angry conduct had put himself into the Favourite's hands. By his accusation against his daughter's virtue he had made it impossible to thwart her marriage. This took place, therefore, on May 16, 1620, the bride having previously received Communion according to the rites of the English Church. Owing to the quarrel it was celebrated quietly, Dr. Williams officiating, and only the King and Rutland attending the ceremony. As a reward for his services, Williams was made Dean of Westminster, as a step to still higher dignity.

The reconciliation between the two Earls seems to have lasted in all sincerity, and there is no record of any further quarrel between Rutland and his son-in-law. As to the husband and wife, it might almost be said that their domestic happiness was a model for all others at the Court of James. Katharine Manners, now “ Kate ” Buckingham, had the good fortune to believe her husband to be one of the best and noblest men. Historians have censured him, his enemies have heaped slander upon him, and it is a fashion now to sneer at him, but the sweet lady who shared his bed, who knew his weaknesses, and could pardon them, was grateful always for her happiness in being married to a man who was kind and generous, and very full of

* Bishop Goodman's “ Memoirs.”

love for her, whose genius (poor "dogge Steenie!") she revered, who seemed to her, beyond all men, greatly gifted with noble qualities. In her letters to him when he was abroad, some of which will be quoted later in this book, she gave expression to these fond beliefs, and poured out upon the paper the full measure of her love and tenderness towards him, pining in his absence like some flower deprived of the sun, praying for the return of her dear lord, and telling him, between her tears, the news of the home-life which she knew he longed to know. There are few more beautiful letters in biography than those of the Lady Katharine to Buckingham, and they reveal her as a very sweet woman and tender wife. In course of time a daughter, Mary, was born to them, called by the pet name of "Little Mall," and it is a delightful trait in the character of Buckingham that he would often take this little girl with him when he went visiting great lords, and was not ashamed of his fondness as a father. When Katharine gave him a boy he was also very proud, and the letters that were written by the husband and wife to the King, with whom Kate Buckingham was soon as much a favourite as George, often contain affectionate allusions to the baby children.

"Kate gives you manie humble thanks for all your favours," writes Buckingham at the foot of one letter. "Mine I reserve till I have the happiness to see you. Kate begins to make use of Mal's tongue, for she had made Mall so importunate with me to stay, that if necessitie had not commanded me, hardlie could I refuse her."

And again, in a postscript—

"Both Kate, Mall and I, humblie thank the good man and pourveir for his present of all kinds."

In 1619, Buckingham, who till then had been living at Whitehall and other Royal residences, began to look out for a home of his own. Chamberlain, writing to Carleton, says: "The Marquis would fain settle himself hereabout, and is much in love with Bedington near Croydon, having won the King, Prince, and divers others, to move Sir Nicholas Carew about it. But it seems he will not be removed, by reason his uncle bestowed it so frankly upon him with purpose to continue his memory there." * Buckingham finally bought from the Earl of

* "Court and Times of James I."

Suffolk, the former Lord Treasurer, the noble mansion and park of New Hall in Essex, and it was his great pleasure to get away for a time from the Court and the crowd of place-seekers to superintend the planning of the grounds, and to be busy with the gentle art of gardening, in which his friend the Lord Chancellor Bacon was a good counsellor. To the King, who was loth to spare him, he wrote many letters, in which, with an adulation that seems too sycophantic to modern readers (though it was then customary language), he excuses himself for his absence, and describes the progress of work on his new estate. One excuse for such holidays from his duties as favourite was the ill health from which he seems to have suffered rather frequently.

"DEAR DAD AND GOSSOPE" (he writes),

"Though I ame yett but weake, and though it may offend you, as it doth my secretarie, yett, in despite of you both. I must have leave now and then to write with my one hand. I ame verie sorie for this new vaine you have taken of cousing of stags, but ame much rejoyced that you attribute so much to my goode lucke, as to thinke, if I were there, your ill fortune would alter ; for which caus, to pleas you, and manie more to please myselfe, I will make all the hast my weaknes will give me leave. I thanke God my grudgings have left me againe, but the hines of my urine, with the yallownes of my skin, betokens a yellow janders, which will be no greate matter to cure, if it prove so. I must end with this paper fo I protest I ame faintish, which is another betokener of that dres I spoke of ; but before I end, I must beseech you to present my humblest service to your sweete babie Charles ; and so I crave your blessing,

"Your Maty. humble Slave and Doge,

"STEENIE"

The following letters, which seem to have been written during another spell of ill health, are interesting as showing the strange mixture of adoration and familiarity with which the Favourite addressed his Sovereign :—

"DERE DAD AND GOSSOPE,

"Though I have reseved three or four letters from you since that I writt last to you, yett, as Thom. Bagger says,

I am not behindhand with you, for I have made a hundred answers to them in my minde, yett none that could satisfie my minde, for kinder letters never servant reseved from master, and for so great a Kinge to desend so loe, as to his humblest slave and servant to communicate himself in a stile of such good fellowship, with expressions of more care than servants have of master, then fesitions have of their patients, which hath largelie appered to me in sicknes and in helth ; of more tendernes than fathers have of children ; of more friendship than between equals, of more affection than between lovers in the best kind, man and wife ; what can I return ? Nothing but silence, for, if I speake, I must be sausie, and say thus, or short of what is due my pourvier,—my good fellow, my phesition, my maker, my frend, my father, my all, I hartelie and humblie thank you for all you doe, and all I have. Judge what unequall langage this is in it selfe, but espetiallie consideringe the thinge that must speak it, and the person to whom it must be spoken. Now, tell me whether I have not done discreetlie to be silent all this while, it's time I should be soe againe, or else commit a falt, in wering him that never weries to doe me good ; then thus I'll end,—I begine my journie to-morrow. I shall have the Prince to waite of. We shall lie at Theobal's, the one will hunt hinds and does, the other survaie the trees, walkes, ponds and dere ; the next day after laye ourselves at your feet, there crave your blessing, then give an account of Theobas Parke to the best of man, though not of the kynd of man yett made by man, more then man, like a man, both arteficiall man, and my most naturall souveraine, who by innumerable favors, hath made me,

“Your Mat. both humble slave & doge,
“STINIE”

“DERE DAD AND GOSSOPE,

“As necessetie inforces me, instede of repareing to you according to your command, and my promis, to goe manie miles from you another way, and, consequentlie from myselfe, all my perfect joys and plesures cheeffie, nay, solie consisting in attending your person, so me thinkes dutie and good manners commands me on the other part, to give you an account under my one hand, though it be yett something unstedie and weeake ;

but before I give the reasons of the change of my former resolution, there is a thinge not much in exercise now in this world called thankfullnes, that caulls so fast and so earnestlie upon me, that I must first, though I have allredie done it by the assistance of a yonge nobleman cauld Babie Charles, whome you likewise, by your good offices, made my frend, whome, without all dout, hath alredie perfectlier made my thanks then I shall myselfe, yet haveing the pen in my hand, I must needs tell you what I observe in your late absent and publicke favor, but antiant manner of obligeing your poure unworthie servant ; whereby I find you still one and the same dere and indulgent master you were ever to me, never being contented to overvalue and love me yourself, but to labor all maner of ways to make the whole world doe soe tow ; besides, this asseures me you trust me as absolutelie as ever, largelie exprest in this, that you have no consete of my popularitie, otherwis whie should you thus study to indere me with the upper and loer House of Parlement, and so consequentlie, with your whole kingdome ; all and the least I can say is this, that I naturallie so love your person, and upon so good experience and knowledge adore all your other parts, which are more than one man ever had, that were not onelie all your people, but all the world besids, sett together on one side, and you alone on the other, I should to obey and please you, displeas, nay, despise all them, & this shall be ever my popularitie. Give me leave here to use your one proverbe, for this the Divill cone me thanks, the reasons of my going to Newhall are these :—First, I find business & the sight of busie folkes does me much harme, and though your extreordinary care and watchfull eie over me would keepe them from speaking with me, yett, in a Court, I must needs louke manie of theme in the face. Then Thebal's hous is now verie hot, and hath bit few chang of romes, both inconvenient to a sick bodie ; then my Lord of Warwicke tells me, that by experience he hath found Newhall are as good a one to ride away an ague as anie in England, and that latelie he lost one by the benefit of that are, I mene nere hand, which, I thinke, will be all one. By this time, I fere I have troubled you, and were it not that I write to you, I ame sure I should have wried myselfe. I have now onelie one request to you, as you first planted me in your Babie Charleses good opinion, if you thinke it fitt for

your service, in my absence continue me in it and so give me your blessing.

"Your Ma^{ty}. humble slave & dogge,
"STINIE"

"DERE DAD AND GOSSOPE,

"I have bine the longer in writing, that I might send you certain word, when I should be able to waite of you. I fear before Wensday I shall not be able to get out of this beselie toun. All the pleasure I have in it is, when I think how well you have gott to Royston. I hope your next will assure me of the like to New Markett. I hate myselfe for forgetting to crave a blessing. I humbly thanke you for chiding me that I asked none, and lett not him be so punished as to be now refused a double one, who craves it with double bended kneenes, but a single intire, humble, and cherefull well contented hart, and so I crave your blessing againe, becaus you are not werie of giveing to him thats your Maty.

"Most humble Slave and Doge,
"STINIE"

"All is well with Kate and Mall. I have playde six setts att mane with Sir John Ayres,* and trewlie its a verie hard

* The name of Sir John Ayres will be remembered by all who have read and re-read the fascinating memoirs of Lord Herbert of Cherbury, for it was with this knight that the valiant little Welshman fought his amazing duel in Whitehall. The Knight's jealousy was aroused because he found upon his wife's breast a miniature portrait of Lord Herbert which she had had copied without the knowledge of the gallant nobleman. Warning was given to Herbert that Sir John Ayres intended to kill him in his bed, but he disregarded it, and sent word to the Knight that although he knew no cause of quarrel he was willing to meet him "in a fair and noble way."

"After this," says Herbert, "finding he could take no advantage against me, then, in a treacherous way, he resolved to assassinate me in this manner. Hearing I was to come to Whitehall on horseback, with two lackeys only, he attended my coming back in a place called Scotland Yard, at the hither end of Whitehall, as you come to it from the Strand, hiding himself here with four men armed, on purpose to kill me.

"I took horse at Whitehall Gate, and passing by that place, he being armed with a sword and dagger, without giving me so much as the least warning, ran at me furiously, but instead of me, wounded my horse in the brisket, as far as his sword could enter for the bone. My horse hereupon starting aside, he ran him again in the shoulder, which, though it made the horse more timorous, yet gave me time to draw my sword. His men thereupon encompassed me, and wounded my horse in three places more; this made my horse kick and fling in that manner as his men durst not come near me; which advantage I took to strike at Sir John Ayres with

mach. What shall I do then with him that eats could custerd with bungelers?"

"DEAR DAD AND GOSSOPE,

"I shall make you wonder att a resolution I have taken never to inquier more after your helth; you can bare me wittnes, that I have never given credit to those that undertake to have the felosifers stone, espeticallie when they becom takers: themselves, as my divill hath now proved him self. If he bloe as profitabelie with all the world besides as he hath done with me, he shall have little need of the felosephers stone; yett if all be trew, he hath assewred to me, I shall thinke my four hundred pound well bestoed. I confess so longe as he conceled the means he wrought by, I despised all he said, but when he tould me that which he hath given your sowverainship to preserve you from all sicknes, evere hereafter, was extracted out of a towed I admired the fellow, and for thees resons, that being a stranger to you, yett he had found out the kind you are come of, and your naturall affections and apetit, and so, like a skillfull man, hath given you naturall fisicke, which is the onelie meanes to preserve the radical hmer (humour) and thus I conclude my son is helthfull, and my divills luckie, my selfe is happie, and neds no more than your blessing, which is my trew felosephers stone, upon which I build as on a rock.

"Your Mat. most humble Slave and Doge,

"STINIE

"Here is a gentle man cauld Sir Frances Leake, who hath likewis a foulosephers stone, its worth but aight thowsand, he will give it me, if you will make him a Baron. I will, if you command not the contrairie, have his patent redie for you to

all my force, but he warded the blow both with his sword and dagger; instead of doing him harm, I broke my sword within a foot of the hilt. Hereupon some passenger that knew me, and observing my horse bleeding in so many places, and so many men assaulting me, and my sword broken, cried to me several times, 'Ride away, ride away;' but I, scorning a base flight upon what terms soever, instead thereof, alighted as well as I could from my horse."

Sir John Ayres and his men now set on Lord Herbert, but in spite of being armed with but half a sword, he defended himself so strenuously that he beat off his assailants, wounding Sir John in four places and nearly cutting off his hand. The narrative of this duel by the hero of it is the finest piece of heroic braggadocio in the English language.

sine when I come doune, he is of good religion, well borne, and hath a good estate. I pray you burne this letter."

The Duke and Duchess often wrote joint letters expressing their thanks to the King for his favours, as in the following :—

"DERE DAD AND GOSSOPE,

"Though you commanded me to right no answer, yett, sences I should not a sleept well this night except I had don it; I hope you will excuse my disobaying of you at this time. I have bine the longer a doing of it, because I might send you the certaner nuse of my health, which at this tim is so good, what with your swett cordiall and my seasonable drawing of blude, that I hope to-moroe to wayt of you a perfect man. I hope you will not be put to much payns to reede this hand, sences you have received so many love letters from her who joynes with me in humble thanks for your kines and care of us both. So craving your blessing, we end

"Your Ma^{ty}: most humble Slaves,

"KATE. STINE"

Whenever "Dogge Steenie" was away from Court the King did not fail to send frequent presents of fruit and flowers and game to his Favourite, and the letters of Buckingham and his wife contain "a million thanks" to their "old purveyor" and to their "dear dad," as they called His Majesty, for his "good mellons and peres," for "two boxes of dried plums and grapes, and the box of violet cakes and chickens," and other gifts. In one letter Buckingham writes: "The sense and thankfulness of my heart for your excellent melons, pears, sugared beans, and assurance of better fruit planted in your bosom than ever grew in paradise, will best appear in my humble obedience of your commands." The conclusion of this letter which spreads out in high-flown phrases of devotion is very characteristic of Buckingham's style of correspondence.

"My stags," he writes, "are all lusty, my calf bold, and others are so too; my Spanish colts are fat, and so is my jovial filly. Mall [little Lady Mary] great Mall [Mary Countess of Buckingham] Kate [his wife] Sue [his sister Susan] and Steenie shall all wait on you on Saturday, and kiss both James' and

Charles' feet. To conclude let this paper assure you, that the last words I spoke to you are so true, that I will not only give my word, sware to you on the Holy Evangelists, but take the blessed Sacrament upon them. So craving your blessing, I rest,

"Your Majestie's most humble slave and dogge,

"STINIE"

"P.S.—Baby Charles, I kiss thy warty hands."

To such letters James replied with equal affection to his "humble slave," and "sweet Tom Badger," as he also called his Favourite, and in a style that encouraged Buckingham's familiarity. The following will serve as a specimen :—

"Sweet hearty blessing, blessing, blessing, on my sweet Tom Badger, and all his, for breeding me so fine a kennel of young hounds, some of them so fair and well-shaped, and some of them so fine pretty little ones, as they are worthy to lie on Steenie and Kate's bed: and all of them run together in a lump; and God thank the Master of the Horse, for providing me such a number of fair useful horses, fit for any hand: in a word, I protest I was never master of such horses and hounds; the bearer will tell you what fine running we had yesterday. Remember now to take the air discreetly, and for God's sake and mine, keep thyself very warm, especially thy head and shoulders; put thy park of Bewlie to an end, and love me still and still, and so God bless thee and my sweet daughter and Goddaughter, to the comfort of thy dear dad.

"JAMES R.

"Thy old purveyor sent thee yesternight six partridges and two leverets. I am going to hawk the pheasant."

We have seen how James publicly proclaimed his affection for the whole Villiers family, but there was one among them who presumed too far upon his favour, and caused him great annoyance. This was the Countess of Buckingham, the Favourite's mother. She seems to have been a woman of some intellect and strength of character, and had great influence over her children. But her ambition and greediness for wealth and

power were beyond all bounds. Some of her match-making schemes have already been described, and by obtaining rich brides for her sons, and a wealthy husband for her daughter Susan,* as well as other good marriages for her numerous cousins and nieces, she achieved a notorious reputation in the Court. "In truth," says John Chamberlain, in one of his gossipy news-letters, "she is to be commended for having such a care to prefer her poor kindred and friends, and a special work of charity it is to provide for young maids, whereby there be six or seven more they say come to town for the same purpose."† But her pride increased with these successes, and she became more arrogant than her powerful son, while she was much less scrupulous in her methods.

In a letter from Dr. Meade to Sir Martin Stuteville‡ there is a story of a chain, valued at £3000, which had belonged to the late Queen, and by the wish of Prince Charles had been given to the Duchess of Lennox. Lady Buckingham was highly annoyed at this gift being conferred upon one whom she considered a rival, and actually dared to send a message next day to the Duchess, asking in the King's name for the return of the chain, which he would replace by something not less valuable.

"The messenger," writes Dr. Meade, "who went in the King's name and not hers, being sounded by the amazed Duchess, whether himself had received that order from the King, or not, at last confessed he was sent by the Countess who had it from his Majesty. Whereupon the Duchess bid him tell the Countess that she would not so much dishonour the Prince who brought it, as to suffer it to be carried back by any hand but his, or her own; for if his Majesty would have it, she would carry it herself; which the next day she performed, desiring to know wherein she offended his Majesty. The King, understanding the business, swore he was abused; and the Prince told him that he took it for so great an affront on his part, that he would leave the Court if she stayed in it; with no small expression of indignation. My author for this was Sir William Bourser, of Uppingham."

There were other things which contributed to the disgrace

* Sir William Fielding, afterwards Lord Denbigh.

† "Court and Times of James I."

‡ Ellis's Original Letters.

of Buckingham's lady mother. The King, who for all his fondness was a shrewd man, saw that his Favourite was too much under the influence of a woman to whom the adventurers about the Court addressed themselves with "presents" that were but bribes to gain the patronage of her son. The Spanish Ambassador, Count Gondomar, in a simile which does more credit to his wit than to his reverence, wrote in his despatches that "There was never more hope of England's conversion to the Roman faith than now; for here are more prayers offered to the Mother than to the Son."

While Buckingham had had trouble over his marriage because his future wife was a Catholic, his mother was being drawn towards the old religion, and this again was a cause of annoyance to the King, chiefly, no doubt, because it would arouse suspicion in the public mind that his Favourite was also a Catholic in sympathy, even though he conformed outwardly to the Church of England. Buckingham must have realized this danger himself, because he took some pains to withdraw her from the influence of a Jesuit named Fisher, to whom she had made a declaration of faith. He engaged the services of Dr. Francis White, Divinity Lecturer at St. Paul's, to hold a polemical battle with the priest in Lady Buckingham's presence.

At one of the conferences that took place the King himself was present. But the Favourite's mother was not shaken in her new convictions, and for a time suffered the King's displeasure by being exiled from the Court. This, however, could have been only a temporary disgrace, for in a little time we find the Favourite including her in the affectionate messages to the King, in a way that showed she had regained His Majesty's good will.

Buckingham's rural pursuits must have been but brief interludes to his duties as King's Favourite, to say nothing of his office as Lord Admiral. As the King's representative, he had an extraordinary variety of duties, from the entertainment of a foreign ambassador to the christening of a baby. He seems to have been very frequently employed in the latter ceremony. Thus we read in Chamberlain's letters (June 26, 1619), that "The Lady of Salisbury is lately brought a-bed of a son, who is to be christened this week by the Prince and Marquis

of Buckingham." And again on February 12, 1619-20, "We hear the Lord Walden's son was christened on Thursday last, at Audley End, by the Duke of Lennox, as deputy for the King, and the Marquis Buckingham."

Sir Symonds D'Ewes tells an amusing story, though he makes it a peg upon which to hang a charge against Buckingham's reverence, with regard to the baptism of one of these nobly born babes. Some young and beautiful women were present with the Favourite, and the minister no sooner came to the passage, where it is required of the sponsors to combat against the weaknesses of the flesh, than Buckingham began to wink and smile at his fair companions, by which the solemnity of the ceremony was highly discomposed.

From such a small ceremony my Lord of Buckingham would go perhaps to take his place in a state reception, such as that described by Chamberlain, on May 25, 1619—

"On Monday the Marquis of Tremouille, the French Ambassador, went to Theobald's with almost three score coaches of four horses, and had a great dinner and banquet, and after went to his audience which was reasonably long. The King used him very graciously, and so he came as he went, accompanied by both the Marquis Buckingham and Hamilton."

During the Ambassador's stay Buckingham grudged the time given to him, as he was then planning out the grounds of Theobald's as well as of his own park. So we find him writing to the King—

"I spent some time in Theobald's Parke to-day, and though it was enough to give directions, yet not to satisfye my longing and desier to stay longer, it is grown so butifull allredie, with the alteration allreadie made."

And again to his "Dear Dad and Gossope"—

"I have bine so busie to entertaine the French Imbassador and the Grave Judge that I have not had time to take such order about my parke as will give you satisfaction; wherefore, not dareing to louke you in the face till I had made some use of my journie, I have taken the bouldness to stay one day longer then I had leave to doe, and truely the Imbassador was so late

in taking his leave, that though I should have attempted the performance of my promis, hardlie should I a bine able to a compassed it, especially after a hartie takeing my leave of my wife. This last excus I hope will pleade pardon, and obtaine it of Babie Charles, and the former of your selfe, in confidence of which, I will be merrie here to-night, and to-morrow, longe before supper. Reseave that which now I bege, your blessing.

"Your Mat^{ty} most humble slave and dogge,

"STINIE"

However glad the Favourite was to retire awhile to his private parks, he was not rash enough to risk losing his hold upon the King by too long an absence, or to forfeit his own prerogatives of patronage. The highest as well as the humblest offices of the Court were in his hands, and if any other person attempted to appoint a friend or a servant to a vacancy without first consulting Buckingham, the Favourite was quick to show his wrath, and exert his supreme influence. Thus he had a tussle with the Earl of Montgomery, Pembroke's dissolute and loud-mouthed brother, then Lord Chamberlain, over a groom-porter's place. This business looked as if it might develop into a serious quarrel, but, writes Chamberlain on October 16, 1619, "The King cut off the difference about the groom-portership by telling the Lord Chamberlain that what right soever he had he should [not] bestow it upon him; so that one Cotterel, a creature of the Lord of Buckingham's placed in by him, continues the possession without interruption."

One of Buckingham's earliest acts of patronage, when he was still Sir George Villiers, was in favour of Lord Herbert of Cherbury. "This Cavalier," writes Herbert, "meeting me accidentally at Lady Stanhope's house, came to me, and told me he had heard so much of my worth, as he would think himself happy if, by his credit with the King, he could do me any service. I humbly thanked him, but told him that for the present I had need of nothing so much as of health, but that if ever I had ambition, I should take the boldness to make my address by him."

Afterwards Buckingham, who admired the chivalrous character of this noted duellist, recommended him as a gentleman suitable to become our ambassador in France. Accordingly,

Lord Herbert journeyed to Paris, where he soon became a favourite among the French ladies, and very quickly had a fierce quarrel with De Luynes, the French King's favourite and the most powerful minister in France, having many Quixotic adventures, which he narrates with the most delightful self-complacency and good humour, as well as with many shrewd observations upon the men, manners, and political events of that country. As an ambassador he was singularly lacking in prudence and tactfulness, being ready to take affront at any fancied insult, and quick to send a challenge to the most exalted in rank, but all his faults were overlooked by Buckingham and the English Court on account of his really heroic courage, and quaint, chivalrous character.

All this gives an insight into Buckingham's own heart. He rejoices in exercising his great power of patronage without payment, and with a really good-natured desire to serve all who appealed to his protection. At this time, indeed before he began to play the dangerous game of international politics, securing himself as domestic favourite of the King, establishing his home and family, and surrounding himself if not with friends of sterling worth, at least with flatterers, prodigal in expressions of servility, we can find much to admire, and but little to blame, in his conduct as the First Favourite. In his rather boyish gaiety and light-heartedness there was a kind of sunshine which cheered those who came within his influence, and it was not yet that men had cause to rail at him as the enemy of his country.

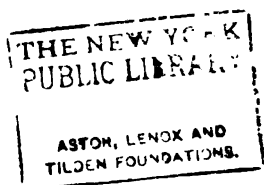
CHAPTER V

THE FAVOURITE AND FRANCIS BACON

IN the early days of 1621, a storm which had long been brewing burst out with a violence which was especially threatening to Bacon and Buckingham; to Bacon as the fountain-head of justice, to Buckingham as the head of the Villiers family, who were accused of gaining wealth by commercial corruption. It has already been mentioned that Edward and Christopher Villiers had tried to increase their wealth by business transactions of a somewhat doubtful character. They had lent their names to the practice of granting monopolies and patents in certain trades. This practice had aroused intense jealousy and rivalry in the city, and in the hands of unscrupulous scoundrels, who had used what was designed for the benefit of trade and the welfare of the nation for their own private advantage, had called forth a great popular protest which could no longer be hushed up. Parliament itself resolved upon an investigation of the alleged abuses, and in the new year of 1621 began that enquiry, with serious and resolute discussion. The subject of these patents is intricate and difficult. It was, and still is, a principle of law to grant a monopoly under certain conditions to those who invent new methods of manufacture, and Bacon as Lord Keeper, as well as his predecessors, had extended the privilege to the promoters of new industries introduced from foreign countries. Theoretically and often in practice, these patents were of benefit to the community by stimulating commercial enterprises. But in the days of the Stuart Court, when bribery was like a canker gnawing at the heart of the purest ideal, it was impossible to prevent these privileges from being gravely abused. In order to gain friends at Court who would facilitate the granting of a patent and its protection, it became customary for the promoters to associate



FRANCIS BACON, LORD VERULAM
AFTER THE PORTRAIT IN GRAY'S INN HALL



with their undertaking some person or persons in high favour, who in return for their name and patronage would receive either a fixed salary or a share of the profits. In this way Edward and Christopher Villiers, and Buckingham himself, were connected with the gold thread patent, the glass patent, and others. It has been proved, however, that the financial benefit derived by Edward and Christopher Villiers from these enterprises was limited to a few hundred pounds, while Buckingham's share was of no account whatever, and his sole interest in the patents was on account of his brothers' connection therewith.*

But apart from these trade monopolies there was one patent or licence granted by the law-officers of the crown which lent itself to abuse of the most scandalous character, and it was unfortunate for Buckingham that the man who was most notorious in exploiting it for his own benefit was his kinsman, Sir Giles Mompesson. It was the licence for ale and wine houses, designed originally to keep a controlling power over the proper conduct of those places which had been too notorious as dens of thieves and immoral people. But it had acted in precisely the opposite direction. Sir Giles Mompesson, into whose hands the power of granting the licences had mainly been given, acquired enormous wealth by receiving heavy bribes from the owners of taverns of the vilest character, and while under his *régime* respectable innkeepers found it difficult to obtain their licence, unless by heavy payment, the numbers of disorderly houses increased enormously, to the great scandal of all sober and decent citizens.

Mompesson, a creature of basest metal, was summoned before a committee of the whole House, and after a severe examination, which revealed the truth of all the charges against him, he was denounced by many of the members with the most resolute determination to have justice done upon him. Thoroughly cowed, this blackmailer and thieves' patron threw himself upon the mercy of the House, which would have no mercy. A warrant was drawn up for his arrest, but when the officer proceeded to deliver it Mompesson jumped out of the window and fled, with the fear of death upon him.

The news of his escape was heard with rage by his enemies in the Lords and Commons. Orders were despatched instantly

* Spedding, Gardiner, etc.

to close all ports, but without avail, for the fugitive was already on board a cross-Channel boat. Then in their rage the people who had thirsted for this victim murmured against Buckingham. Mompesson, they said, would not have got away if his kinsman the Favourite had not smuggled him through.

Buckingham at this time was in a dangerous situation. There were many people, of high as well as of common rank, who believed that their opportunity had come to drag down the Favourite, and to strike at him through this movement against the patents with which his family had been mixed up. Buckingham had not touched a penny of the plunder, but it was characteristic of him that he was eager at first to defend the principle of these patents, and to take upon himself the championship of his two brothers and of the minor courtiers who had dabbled in these commercial enterprises. That his own family should be covertly attacked, and that he should be aimed at by the opponents of his patronage, was sufficient to arouse a spirit of haughty defiance in him. Before the crisis came which led to Mompesson's flight, he made it clear that any man who dared to speak against the monopolies would be regarded as his personal enemy, and must expect his vengeance. Sir Henry Yelverton, the Attorney-General, who declared against their legality, soon felt the weight of the Favourite's hand. Accused of a technical offence in drawing up a charter for the City of London, he was prosecuted in the Star Chamber, and dismissed from his office. Sir Thomas Coventry, the Solicitor-General, who at this time was one of Buckingham's flatterers, became the new Attorney-General. Other friends of the Favourite were raised to high office. Sir James Ney, who at the age of sixty-eight played into the hands of Buckingham's match-making mother, and agreed to bestow his wealth upon the Favourite's niece, Elizabeth Butler, was made Chief Justice of the King's Bench. (It was a merry jest to the wits of the Court and town.) Sir Henry Montagu, who vacated that position, bought the office of Lord Treasurer at a price of £20,000, and was raised to the peerage as Viscount Mandeville. Bacon, who was not one of his friends, met him going to Newmarket to receive the white staff of office from the King's hands. "Take care, my lord," said the philosopher, with quiet sarcasm. "Wood is dearer at Newmarket than in any other place in England."

But although Buckingham thus showed that the Royal patronage still flowed through his hands alone, there were ominous signs in both Houses of Parliament that his two brothers would be associated with the crimes of Mompesson, and that he would in all likelihood be denounced as the responsible adviser of the King in this business.

Bacon, who was more closely responsible, read the signs of the storm with a clearer vision than the careless Favourite. He wrote him a warning letter. Referring to the connection of Christopher Villiers and some of Buckingham's own followers with the patents, he urged him "to put off the envy of these things." "It would be to take the thanks for ceasing them than the note for maintaining them." But Buckingham, believing as usual in the supreme power of his personality, ignored the wisdom of the Lord Keeper, and upheld the legality of the patents. It was only when Mompesson yielded to the violent outburst of indignation in the Commons and then fled the country that Buckingham began to realize the peril of defying such national opposition. In the Lords he first showed a defensive attitude by hinting that the responsibility for these things was not upon his shoulders, but upon the officers of state who had directly sanctioned the patents, and imprisoned those who had traded without licence. For this he has been blamed as an ungenerous and cowardly attempt to shelter himself behind the Lord Keeper. Yet in justice it must be admitted that he was at least technically correct. He had no direct interest in the patents, and they had not been granted by his authority. The late Lord Chancellor Ellesmere, and Bacon his successor, had, as the highest representatives of the law, given their sanction and seals to the licences now so loudly condemned. To the great officers of the law, therefore, must the Commons address their complaints, and not to one who, though the King's right hand in the dispensing of Royal favours, had no authority in the administration and interpretation of justice.

James himself entered into this conflict, and while he agreed to full consideration being given to the alleged abuses, he bullied the Commons for their disregard of his Royal prerogative, and of his Favourite's gracious interpretation of the Royal will. In one of those extraordinary similes which so often

dropped from the lips of the pedant King between phrases of ponderous eloquence, garnished with Latin, he defended his beloved Steenie, and took his stand by the Favourite's side.

"Before Parliament met," he said, "my subjects whenever they had any favour to ask used to come either to me or to Buckingham. But now, as if we had both ceased to exist, they go to the Parliament. All this is most disrespectful. I will, therefore, tell you a fable. In the days when animals could speak, there was a cow burthened with too heavy a tail, and before the end of the winter she had it cut off. When the summer came, and the flies began to annoy her, she would gladly have had her tail back again. I and Buckingham are like the cow's tail, and when the session is over you will be glad to have us back again to defend you from abuses."

Such words as these were not likely to impress a House firm in its resolve to remedy a great abuse. Indeed, the temper of the Lords as well as of the Commons was not to be cooled down by Royal censure. Bacon and Lord Mandeville, the Treasurer, were practically put on their trial by the peers, Pembroke interrogating them severely in the Upper House, while old Edward Coke, in spite of his relationship to the Villiers family, led a bitter opposition in the Commons, and rejoiced in his opportunity of attacking from that place the reputation of his old enemy, the Lord Keeper. Sir Henry Yelverton, now a prisoner in the Tower, was also subjected to an examination about the granting of the patents, and his evidence indicated the full measure of the abuse to which they had been put. Even Cranfield, who had been a flatterer of the Favourite, declared himself on the side of the Opposition, and his hostility to Bacon led him to demand an examination of those who had been directly responsible for the grants.

The King was alarmed. It was a direct attack upon his Royal prerogative that his Great Seal should be called to the bar of the House of Commons. Buckingham also was scared at this general execration of the monopolies with which his name was associated. In this difficult and dangerous position there was one who whispered in the ear of the Favourite words of good counsel. Dr. Williams, who had won Buckingham's favour by his good help over the marriage with Kate Manners, advised his patron, not only to bow before the storm, but to

take the lead in the opposition to the monopolies. By that means he would not only avert personal danger, but would gain popular homage, and effect an alliance between the Court and the people. Buckingham heard these words as a Gospel. They seemed to him not only full of wisdom for the solution of the greatest difficulty he had yet faced, but an opportunity for a dramatic display of his personality. At his heart he was an actor. He loved to take the centre of the stage with a noble audience. He was one of those men who delight in their own presence, and pose with the greatest pleasure before the mirror of their self-opinion. It was through no craven fear that Buckingham accepted the advice of Williams, but it seemed to him now a noble thing that he should startle the Opposition, and receive the acclaim of the Lords, Commons, and people, as the champion of reform against the abuses with which he had been only nominally allied. It was, therefore, with self-satisfaction that he rose in his seat in the Lords to intervene in a discussion of the patents. But he was a little too eager. Not being a member of the Committee, he had no right to speak. Lord Southampton silenced him with a severe rebuke. Buckingham accepted it at the time, but later he demanded satisfaction for the insult, and would have drawn his sword upon Southampton but for the intervention of the Prince of Wales. Later he received permission to speak, and used his opportunity with a fine sense of drama. With every show of indignation and noble feeling, he denounced the abuses that had corrupted the patent grants. He referred to his brothers Edward and Christopher, who had been accused of a share in the evil business. "If my father," he said, "had begotten two sons to be grievances to the Commonwealth, I must tell you that the same father begot a third son who would help in punishing them."

These words were heard with surprise by the peers, and with delight in the House of Commons. The members of the Lower House did not doubt the sincerity of the Favourite, and believing that he was the spokesman of the Sovereign, as indeed he was in this matter, at once abandoned their hostility to him, and proceeded with the Bill against the monopolies without demanding the examination of Bacon and the other great officers of state, who had given their seals to the patents. Buckingham had gained a great personal triumph, and had saved the King

from humiliation. The Commons showed their gratitude for the withdrawal of the King's opposition to reform, by granting two heavy subsidies for an army to be raised in defence of his son-in-law, the Elector Palatine and titular King of Bohemia, whose territory had been invaded by the Austrians, and James, whose temper had been sadly ruffled by the early actions of this Parliament, now, with money in his hands, forgot his displeasure.

Another scene took place in the Lords, however, in which Buckingham was again the central figure. It was when Yelverton was examined upon the circumstances attending the grant for the patent of inns, and the patent for gold and silver thread. Yelverton had been brooding over his committal to the Tower, of which Buckingham had been the instrument, and now, with his temper roused, he defended himself by protesting that he had been punished by the King for checking the abuses of the inn-licences, and had suffered by the ill-will of the Favourite, who stood "ever at his Majesty's hand to hew him down." The words were not only an attack upon Buckingham, who was now on the side of reform, but a direct insult to the King, who was charged with injustice owing to the influence of his Favourite. Such words could not be passed in silence. Cries resounded on every side protesting against this language. But Buckingham, ready always to face an accusation with haughty scorn, bore down the voices that bade the speaker hold his peace. "He that will seek to stop him," he said, "is more my enemy than his."

Sir Henry Yelverton was sent back to the Tower, but a few days later the Lords discussed whether he should be again heard to explain his words. This time Arundel, although a member of the Howard family, who were most hostile to the Favourite, sprang to his feet and demanded the punishment of the prisoner for his slander against the Sovereign and the Earl. Buckingham was grateful for this ally, and did not forget to reward him afterwards. But at the time Arundel's speech aroused the anger of those peers who believed that Yelverton had been unjustly committed to the Tower without a trial. Lord Spencer expressed surprise that such words should come from Lord Arundel, whose two ancestors, the Duke of Norfolk and the Earl of Surrey, had been condemned to death without a hearing. Arundel retorted with an insolence that was characteristic of him. He acknowledged that his ancestors had suffered,

though they had been loyal to the King, and "in such time as when perhaps the lord's ancestors that spake last were keeping sheep." Another storm broke out at these words of insult, and on both sides the temper in the Upper House was dangerously heated. In the end Yelverton was examined for his attack upon the honour of the King, and his slander against Buckingham. He had no proof to offer, and sentence was passed against him. He was ordered to be imprisoned during the King's pleasure, and to be fined 10,000 marks for his insult to the Sovereign. For his words against the Earl of Buckingham he was fined 5000 marks.

As soon as the judgment was pronounced Buckingham stood up in his place, and displayed a generosity to his enemy which was again characteristic of a man who, with all his faults, had no meanness of spirit, and would never profit in money from a fallen foe. With a gracious condescension he freely remitted the fine for the slander against him, and promised to move the King to mitigate the other part of the punishment. It was a generous action well done, and one of those incidents in the career of Buckingham which go far to redeem his weakness, and give some touch of nobility even to his vanity.

The King, grateful for the subsidies, was anxious to support his Favourite's action, and he sent a strong assurance to the Commons of his desire to remove the abuse and release those prisoners who had suffered for defying the monopolies.

"Three Patents at this time," he said, "have been complained of and thought great grievances.

"(1) That of the Inns and hostelries.

"(2) That of alehouses.

"(3) That of gold and silver thread.

My purpose is to strike them all dead, and that time may not be lost I will have it done presently.* That concerning alehouses I would have to be left to the managing of the Justices of the Peace, as before. That of gold and silver thread was most vilely executed, both for wrong done to men's persons, also for abuse in the state; for it was a kind of false coin. I have already freed the persons that were in prison. I will also now damn the Patent." †

* "Immediately," according to the old meaning of the above word.

† Rushworth.

It was a wise policy of James to bow before the will of the Commons; and to Williams who had suggested the abandonment of the monopolies, and to Buckingham who had so boldly accepted defeat with an air of victory, there was just cause of satisfaction. The spirit of reconciliation healed the wounds that had been given and received on both sides. Yelverton was forgiven, and Cranfield, who had at first shown great hostility to Bacon, but afterwards served the interests of the Court party, was advanced in favour. Only Bacon was excluded from the general peace-making, and before, indeed, the settlement of this business of the monopolies his enemies had gathered about him with sharp swords.

In this study of Buckingham's life it would be unnecessary and out of place to go fully into the charges brought against the Lord Chancellor. He was accused of taking bribes from suitors in the Chancery Court, and it has been proved, to the great grief of all who have the most profound reverence for the giant intellect of the author of the *Essays* and "*The Advancement of Learning*," that he was guilty of these grave offences against the purity of justice. The progress of his impeachment, and the eagerness with which the Howards and other enemies seized upon the charges in order to drag down a great man from his high estate, need not be described in this narrative. But what is more to the purpose here is the conduct of George Villiers towards his friend and counsellor in the days of his disgrace. It has been said too often, and is still repeated, that Buckingham deserted the Lord Chancellor, and with cowardly ingratitude ranged himself on the side of Bacon's enemies. There is not a word of truth in this. Buckingham could not prevent the impeachment—the King himself, who was shocked by the charges against his Chancellor, did not, and could not, demand more for him than a full and fair investigation—nor could Buckingham disprove or defend the guiltiness which was too clearly revealed, as the evidence was examined, and was, indeed, fully confessed by the unhappy man. But Buckingham did all that the best of friends could do to soften the tragedy, and to mitigate the punishment. From his place in the House of Lords he held a watching brief for the accused, and whenever his voice was heard it was with a plea that justice might be tempered with mercy.

He could do no more, though it must be admitted that in loyalty to a friend he could do no less. It was to him that the Lord Chancellor turned in his agony of spirit, and on the same day that Christopher Aubrey presented the petition to the House which led to the impeachment Bacon wrote a sad letter to the Marquis.

"MY VERY GOOD LORD,

"Your Lordship spake of purgatory. I am now in it, but my mind is a calm ; for my fortune is not my felicity. I know I have clean hands and a clean heart ; and I hope a clean house for friends or servants. But Job himself, or whoever was the justest judge, by such hunting for matters against him as hath been used against me, may for a time seem foul, specially in a time when greatness is the mark and accusation is the game. And if this be to be a Chancellor, I think if the Great Seal lay upon Hounslow Heath, nobody would take it up. But the King and your Lordship will, I hope, put an end to these miseries one way or other. And in truth that which I fear most is lest continual attendance and business together with these cares, and want of time to do my weak body right this spring by diet and physic, will cast me down ; and then it will be thought feigning or fainting. But I hope in God I shall hold out. God prosper you." *

Under the nervous strain of his impending fate—in his heart now he knew that he had been guilty of most fatal folly—Bacon's health gave way, and in spite of his hope to "hold out," he had to send an excuse to the Lords for absence from his place in their House. It was Buckingham who delivered the letter, and in presenting it he told the peers that he had by the King's direction visited the Lord Chancellor twice, and had found him the first time "very sick and heavy," but the second time better, and much comforted by hearing that the complaints against him had been referred to their House, where he assured himself to find honourable justice.

During the next few weeks the first accusation of bribery was followed by others, many who had given presents, and had got no satisfaction from them, being eager to add to the evidence

* Spedding.

of the Chancellor's guilt. The Lords were busy investigating these proofs, and Bacon realized with terrible clarity that he would never clear his good name and fame. On March 21st he wrote to the Lord Marquis, "who was my anchor in these floods," begging him to hand an enclosed letter to the King. That was a pitiful appeal, in which he defended the purity of his motives, whatever his outward faults had been.

"I have been no avaricious oppressor of the people," he said. "I have been no haughty or intolerable or hateful man in my conversation or carriage . . . and for the briberies and gifts wherewith I am charged, when the book of hearts shall be opened, I hope I shall not be found to have the troubled fountain of a corrupt heart in a deformed habit of taking rewards to pervert justice; howsoever I may be frail, and partake of the abuse of the times.

"And therefore I am resolved when I come to my answer not to trick up my innocency (as I writ to the Lords) by cavillations or voidances, but to speak to them the language that my heart speaketh to me, in excusing, extenuating, or ingenuous confessing; praying to God to give me the grace to see to the bottom of my faults, and that no hardness of heart do steal upon me, under shew of more neatness of conscience than is cause."

At the end of April the Committees of Lords appointed to investigate the charges presented their reports, and on April 22nd Bacon, knowing that he would be condemned, made "a humble submission and supplication" to his judges.

"My humble suit to your Lordships is," he concluded, "that my penitent submission may be my sentence, and the loss of the seal my punishment; and that your Lordships will spare any further sentence, but recommend me to his Majesty's grace and pardon for all that is past." *

On April 24th the Prince of Wales himself delivered this letter, which was read first by the clerk and then by the Lord Chief Justice. It was followed by a long silence, and then the Lord Chamberlain, the Earl of Suffolk, and the Earl of Southampton protested that this submission could not be accepted, as it was a general, and not a particular, confession of the corruption with which he was accused. A hot discussion followed,

* Spedding.

both the Prince of Wales and the Marquis of Buckingham urging earnestly that the submission should be accepted, and that Bacon should be spared a formal sentence. They were strongly out-voted on this, and then another debate followed as to whether the Chancellor should be called to the bar of the House, or whether the indictment against him should be sent and answered by letter. Again Buckingham stepped forward to spare his friend the full measure of his disgrace, and pleaded Bacon's bad state of health as a sufficient reason to excuse his personal attendance. He was supported in this by the Prince, the Duke of Lennox, and the Earl of Southampton, and after much opposition the privilege was allowed.* On the 30th of April the Lord Chief Justice received from the Chancellor a second submission, in which, clause by clause, he confessed the truth of his charges. "I do plainly and ingenuously confess," he said, "that I am guilty of corruption, and do renounce all defence and put myself upon the grace and mercy of your lordships."

It is one of the most tragic documents in biographical history, and all condemnation of Bacon's guilt is overpowered by a pity for his misery. As soon as it had been read to the Lords they sent a committee to York House, in order to learn whether the signature was genuine. "My Lords," said the Chancellor, "it is my act, my hand, my heart. I beseech your Lordships be merciful unto a broken reed." The King was now prayed to demand the surrender of the Great Seal, which had been so abused. James gave his assent, saying that he would have done it, even if he had not been asked. So on May 1st the Earl of Pembroke, Lord Mandeville, the Duke of Lennox, and Lord Arundel went to York House, to the bedside of what seemed to them a dying man. They had come to do justice, but they were not unmoved by pity. "We wish that it had been better with you," said one. "The worse the better," said the broken man. Then after a silence he broke out into a poignant expression of misery. "By the King's great favour I received the Great Seal; by my own fault I have lost it." It was the hour of his utter despair and self-abasement.

Those who were his enemies in the House would give him no peace. On the following day a deputation again came to his

* Rushworth.

bedside to summon him to the bar of the House. But he was really too ill to move. The agony of his spirit had left his body weak.

On May 3rd, therefore, the Lords, the majority of whom were not vindictive, and had no desire to inflict unnecessary suffering upon the fallen man, accepted this plea of ill-health, and prepared to decide his punishment. It was a solemn and awful scene in the Upper Chamber, with a full assembly of lords spiritual and temporal deliberating on the fate of a man who had been greatest among them. Some were stern in their desire for a dread sentence. Lord Saye demanded his degradation from the peerage, in addition to the fine and imprisonment, which was quickly decided. When this was voted against by the Prince and Buckingham, and other members of what might be called the Court Party, Suffolk's son, Lord Howard de Walden, demanded that at least his titles of nobility should be suspended during his lifetime. Against these proposals of personal degradation Buckingham raised his voice: "The Chancellor has not long to live," he said. In the end the sentence adopted was that Bacon should pay a fine of £40,000, should be imprisoned during the King's pleasure, should be disabled from holding any office in the State and from sitting in Parliament, and that he should not come within twelve miles of the Court. This was put to the vote, and carried with only one dissident. The solitary voice was Buckingham's, who to the last, standing upon his honour and loyalty as a friend, would not associate himself with the prosecution, though it had been conducted fairly and according to the rules of justice.

Buckingham's behaviour throughout this great tragedy is proof enough that the charge against him of deserting Bacon in his trouble is utterly without foundation. Indeed, as he had risked his favour with the King by too resolutely advising the dissolution of Parliament, so that the Chancellor should not be brought to trial, so now he risked the animosity of his peers by postponing the effect of their sentence upon the condemned man who had been ordered to the Tower.

Southampton, who had been especially stern in his demand for the punishment of the great offender, asked a question in the House of Lords as to the reason why the Lord Chancellor had not yet gone to the Tower.

It was the Lord Admiral who answered. "The King," said Buckingham, "hath respited his going to the Tower in this time of his great sickness."

It was not until the end of the month that Bacon was duly committed to the Tower, to be kept there "during his Majesty's pleasure," so that the sentence of his peers was not made vain; but his Majesty's pleasure, prompted by Buckingham, did not suffer his old and trusty servant to stay long in that dread place. On the 31st of May of this same year, 1621, the ex-Chancellor addressed a piteous note to the Lord Marquis—

"GOOD MY LORD,

"Procure the warrant for my discharge this day. Death, I thank God, is so far from being unwelcome to me, as I have called it (as Christian resolution would permit) any time these three months. But to die before the time of his Majesty's grace, and in this disgraceful place, is even the worst that could be; and when I am dead, he is gone that was always in one tenor, a true and peaceful servant to his master, and one that was never author of any immoderate, no, nor unsafe, no (I will say it) not unfortunate counsel; and one that no temptation could ever make other than a trusty, and honest, and thrice loving friend to your Lordship; and howsoever I acknowledge the sentence just, and for reformation sake fit, the justest Chancellor that hath been in the five changes since Sir Nicholas Bacon's time. God bless and prosper your Lordship whatsoever become of me.

"Your Lordship's true friend, living and dying,

"FR. ST. ALBAN

"TOWER,

"31st May, 1621"

Buckingham acted quickly in getting the King's authority for the release of the unhappy prisoner, for only four days later Bacon writes to him from Sir John Vaughan's house at Fulham—

"MY VERY GOOD LORD,

"I heartily thank your Lordship for getting me out of prison, and now my body is out, my mind nevertheless will still be in prison, till I may be on my feet to do his Majesty

and your Lordship faithful service, wherein your Lordship by the grace of God, shall find that my adversity hath neither spent nor pent my spirits. God prosper you.

"Your Lordship's most obliged

"Friend and Faithful servant,

"FR. ST. ALBAN"

During June Bacon stayed in London, against the ruling of the sentence which had banished him twelve miles from the Court, and he tells Buckingham in a letter that he has petitioned the King to give him leave to stay "at" London till the last of July, in order that he may settle his debts. Buckingham served him still by taking Bacon's most faithful servant Meantys "to kiss His Majesty's hands," and to plead for his master's interests. "My riches in my adversity have been," writes Bacon to the Lord Admiral, "that I have had a good master, a good friend, and a good servant." Then there is an undated letter, written probably at the beginning of July, in which he gives news to Buckingham of his having reached his home at Gorhambury safely.

"My Lord" (he adds), "I wish myself by you in this stirring world not for any love to place or business, for that is almost gone with me, but for my love to yourself, which can never cease in

"Your Lordship's most obliged friend

"and true servant,

"FR. ST. ALBAN

"Being now out of eare and out of sight, I recommend myself to your Lordship's love and favour to maintain me in His Majesty's grace and good intention."

The ex-Chancellor's speedy release, and the evident desire of Buckingham and of the King and Prince to minimize his punishment, aroused the hostility not only of those who had directly engineered his downfall, but of political malcontents among the people. The Favourite received a warning that in sheltering Bacon he was putting himself into a perilous position. "The rumour lately spread," says Sir Anthony Ashby, writing

to him before the actual release of the great prisoner, "touching his majesty's untimely pardon of the late Lord Chancellor's fine and imprisonment, with some other favours intended towards him (said to be procured by your Lordship's only intimation) hath exceedingly exasperated the rancour of the ill-affected ; which albeit it be false, and unlikely because very unseasonable, it doth yet serve the present turn for the increase of malice against you. I can but inform your Lordship of what I understand. You may please to make use thereof as yourself thinketh best."

Buckingham entirely disregarded such warning, and in answer to the many applications of Bacon for help in his distressed circumstances, and above all for the removal of that restriction which kept him an exile from London, promised to use his influence with the King. But now an episode took place which proved the Favourite's uncertain temperament, and was the cause of an estrangement, though less than a quarrel, between him and the fallen Chancellor. Bacon being removed from London, Buckingham took it into his head to covet the exile's London residence, York House. It seemed to him that it was of no further use to Bacon, and that in offering to purchase it he would be doing a service to his friend, who in spite of his condemnation for bribery and corruption was seriously in need of money. The offer was made with great courtesy. "If your Lordship or your Lady find it inconvenient for you to part with the house, I would rather provide myself otherwise than any way incommode you, but will never slack anything of my affection to do you service."

But Bacon had a strong affection for York House, which had belonged to his father, and held so many of his great memories ; and when with equal courtesy he excused himself from taking advantage of the Lord Marquis's offer, it seemed, unreasonably no doubt, to Buckingham a strange ingratitude in return for all his friendship. In the letters that now passed between them there was certainly a coolness in Buckingham's tone towards his former friend, to be read rather in a more formal mode of address than in actual words of disfavour ; and from various references to the treaty about York House it is clear that Bacon's refusal rankled with him. Bacon himself believed that the delay in sending him the King's free pardon, which he had

been led to expect, was directly due to this displeasure of the Favourite, and he endeavoured in his letters to restore Buckingham's good humour, though he could not bring himself to withdraw his refusal to part with his town house.

The real cause why Bacon's pardon was withheld for some time was the officiousness of Williams, who had succeeded him as Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal, owing his appointment to a sedulous flattery of the King and his favourite, and by a political shrewdness in his counsels, which seemed to both his masters golden in its wisdom.

Partly, no doubt, to enjoy his new power, he put impediments in the way of the pardon, but we may give him credit for sincerity when he said that, in view of another assembling of Parliament, it would be advisable to wait until after the House had met and had been prorogued before he affixed his seal to a pardon which might be the cause of popular complaint against the King and the Marquis of Buckingham.

This delay was exasperating to the proud spirit of Francis Bacon, and he stormed the Favourite, all his friends, Sir Edward Sackville, the Duke of Lennox, Lord Digby, Lord Montgomery, Sir Tobie Mathews, and others, and even the House of Lords, in a formal petition, to have his ban removed. Unceasingly did he plead with his friends to use their influence with Buckingham, so that his affection might be renewed in its former warmth; nor were these friends careless in forwarding his interests—indeed, the zealous way in which they schemed to obtain a hearing from the Lord Admiral on behalf of the fallen Chancellor, not only does credit to their unselfishness, but is a striking proof of the Favourite's power and the awe with which he was regarded, even by such an exalted person as the Earl of Montgomery, Lord Chamberlain of the King's Household. Thus, in a letter from Bacon's servant, Thomas Meantys, to his master, we read, under the date of January 7th, 1621—

“ May it please your Lordship,

“ This afternoon my Lady [Lady St. Alban] found access to my Lord Marquis, procured for her by my Lord of Montgomery and Sir Edward Sackville, who seemed to contend which of them should show most patience in waiting (which they did a whole afternoon) the opportunity to bring my Lord

in his chamber, where my Lady attended him. But when he was come she found time enough to speak at large ; and though my Lord spoke so loud as that what passed was no secret to me, and some others that were within hearing ; yet because my Lady told me she purposeth to write to your Lordship the whole passage, it becomes not me to anticipate by these, any part of her Ladyship's relation."

What smoothed over the trouble between Buckingham and the ex-Chancellor was an offer from the Duke of Lennox for York House, and Bacon's refusal to part with it on the score that if any man had it—"and no money or value shall make me part with it"—it should be the Lord Marquis. This coming to the ears of Buckingham had an extraordinarily soothing effect upon his spirits, which had been so ruffled over what at this distance of time seems so trivial a cause of anger. In the meantime also he had decided to purchase Wallingford House, near Whitehall, from Lord and Lady Wallingford, of the Howard family. Some said that part of the bargain was the release of Somerset and his lady, and the creation of Sir Thomas Howard as Viscount Andover.*

So the cause of estrangement between these two great characters was at an end, and Buckingham was the first to make an *amende honorable*.

"MY HONOURABLE LORD" (he wrote),

"Now that I am provided of a house I have thought it congruous to give your Lordship notice thereof, that you may no longer hang upon the treaty which hath been between your Lordship and me touching York-house ; [in] which I assure your Lordship, I never desired to put you to the least inconvenience.

"So I rest your Lordship's faithful servant,

"G. BUCKINGHAM"

Bacon answered this with expressions of thankfulness that the unfortunate misunderstanding was now at an end, and begged the Marquis again to approach the King on his behalf.

* Chamberlain.

To this Buckingham replied in still more cordial tones, returning to his former style of friendly correspondence.

"I will move his Majesty," he wrote, "to take commiseration of your long imprisonment which in some respects both you and I have reason to think harder than the Tower ; you for the help of physic, your parley with your creditors, your conference for your writings and studies, your dealing with friends about your business ; and I for the advantage to be sometimes happy in visiting and conversing with your Lordship, whose company I am much desirous to enjoy, as being tied by ancient acquaintance to rest always,

"Your Lordship's faithful friend and servant,

"G. BUCKINGHAM "

Curiously enough, even after this letter, he had not quite got over his huff about York House, and to Sir Edward Sackville and Henry Cary, Viscount Falkland, who waited on him in the interests of Bacon, he referred to it as if it were still a grievance. It appeared that he would not be quite satisfied until the house had been given up by the ex-Chancellor to one of his, the Favourite's, own friends ; and Sir Lionel Cranfield, who had now been made Lord Treasurer, with the title of Earl of Middlesex, was the one for whom he wished it. Sackville advised Bacon to yield on this point if he wished to regain full favour.

"Make the Treasurer believe that since the Marquis will by no means accept of it, and that you must part with it, you are more willing to pleasure him than anybody else, because you are given to understand my Lord Marquis so inclines ; which inclination, if the Treasurer shortly send unto you about it, desire may be more clearly manifested than as yet it hath been." Bacon was prevailed upon to play this game, and although he had declared that "no money or value shall make me part with it," finally consented to sell it to the Lord Treasurer, strictly upon the understanding that it was to give pleasure to his good friend the Lord Marquis.

He obtained some reward, though not all he had hoped. On the 20th of March, 1621, he wrote that "these main and real favours which I have lately received from your good Lordship

in procuring my liberty and a reference of the consideration of my relief are such as I now find that in building upon your Lordship's noble nature and friendship I have built upon the rock, where neither winds nor waves can cause overthrow."

In some way that has not been satisfactorily explained Bacon was able to serve Buckingham in the purchase of New Hall, which he bought from the Earl of Sussex in the autumn of 1622 for the sum of £22,000.* At this period Bacon also obtained the friendly interest of the Favourite's mother, and perhaps owing to her influence, which was still great over her son, the ex-Chancellor obtained an interview with him, and by him shortly afterwards was taken to kiss the King's hands. James received his old friend and servant with kindness, and made provision to settle some of his debts. But though he continued to court the King and Buckingham, and afterwards Charles I., with pleading letters and offers of service, he was ignored and neglected. New men filled his old places, and those who had once sought his counsels had learnt to do without him. The end of this sad, broken man, one of the greatest of England's intellectual giants, though with a strain of moral weakness which warps one's admiration of his genius, is familiar to every one. Getting out of his coach near Highgate, in order to experiment on the effect of cold for preserving meat by stuffing a fowl with snow, he caught a mortal chill. He was taken to the neighbouring house of his friend Lord Arundel, then away from home, and died there on the 9th of April, 1626.

These details of his downfall have a place in this book only because of Buckingham's relations with him; and Buckingham does not stand convicted of any want of faith in friendship. Apart from the trouble over York House, which after all was the cause of nothing more serious than a temporary coolness, the Lord Marquis was not only without disloyalty, but warm, generous, and even rash in his eagerness to save the Chancellor from the consequences of his offences. So far from feeling that Buckingham was guilty of desertion, he moves our admiration by the courageous and gallant-hearted way in which he stood by a fallen friend. As in the case of Somerset, he had been

* Chamberlain.

generous to a fallen man. We feel that, whatever the moral weakness of Buckingham himself, however faulty he was in his public conduct, affected by the accident of his position and the irresponsibility of his power, there was at the heart of him some good gold.

CHAPTER VI

THE JOURNEY TO SPAIN

LOOKING back on the reign of James, one cannot fail to see that its most fatal cause of trouble was the policy of the Spanish party, which sought an alliance with a nation so utterly divorced from ours by faith and by traditional enmity. The English people, becoming more and more Puritan as the customs of the old religion were forgotten, were still proud of that spirit which had quickened them to great adventures in the yesterdays, when Elizabeth was Queen. The sons of men who had sailed with Drake round the world, or had seen his home-comings when Plymouth bells rang for his triumphs; those whose fathers had captured great treasure-ships on the Spanish main, who had been trained in the school of Hawkins, Grenville, Raleigh, Frobisher, and the great Sir Francis, who told to their children the story of the Armada, and a thousand tales of Spanish cruelty and of English heroism that was no less cruel, had in their blood a natural antagonism to the very name of Spain. Prejudices founded upon horrors told by pirate seamen who had once rotted in Spanish prisons, and now, in the tap-rooms, were heroes of their village, and religious hatred fostered by Puritan preachers, to whom Rome was Babylon and the Pope the Scarlet Woman, fanned the flame of popular passion against the Catholic nation, which in the last reign had been humiliated by English seamen.

Yet there were men in England so out of touch with the national spirit, or so reckless of it, that they wished to draw close to Spain, and to buy its friendship by a Royal alliance. The infamous Somerset, as he was popularly regarded after the scandal of Overbury's murder, had proposed that the Heir to the throne should seek his wife in Spain; and though now Somerset

was down, this policy had been steadily pressed forward by those who followed him in power, and by those who had put such thoughts into his brain. For a long time there had been secret correspondence on this subject between the two courts, and tentative negotiations, yet not so secret that some news had leaked out and caused grave uneasiness in the people's mind.

In 1618, however, an event happened which plunged Europe into the last and most terrible of the great religious wars, and for a time made it seem as if war between England and Spain was now inevitable. The Lutherans of Bohemia, finding their faith and political independence threatened by the House of Austria, offered their crown to Frederic, the Calvinist leader of German Protestantism, and the son-in-law of King James. Before accepting an offer which flattered his vanity and ambition, but brought with it a perilous responsibility, Frederic sent over to England to ask the advice of his wife's father. James was terribly embarrassed at the news. He had listened to the overtures of Gondomar, the Spanish ambassador, for a Spanish match with his son, and he was not blind to the inevitable consequence of a quarrel with Spain if he supported his son-in-law's new title against the House of Austria. Nor, with his convictions as to the Divine Right of Kings, could he honestly acquiesce in Frederic's acceptance of a crown at the hands of a rebellious people. In spite, therefore, of his genuine love for his daughter Elizabeth, and his affection for her husband, James delayed giving any answer to Frederic's appeal for advice, and suffered himself to be cajoled and bullied by the Spanish ambassador, whose instructions were to keep England neutral while Spanish troops went to the assistance of the Austrian House to recapture the revolting kingdom of Bohemia. But in the meanwhile Frederic decided for himself and accepted the proffered crown, which was placed upon his head at Prague. James was now deeply annoyed, and Buckingham, who had a personal dislike to Frederic, followed his master's mood, and openly declared that the Elector had mounted too high a horse, and must be pulled off. But in a little while events followed which caused a great revulsion of feeling, and aroused, indeed, in England a passionate outburst of public opinion, which swept with it the King himself, the Prince, Buckingham, and all but the Catholic party in the nation.

The German Protestants over which Frederic now ruled were hopelessly divided against themselves. The Lutherans hated the Calvinists worse almost than they hated Catholics, and when they were threatened by an invasion of Austrian and Spanish troops, internal conflicts prevented a combined and heroic defence, which perhaps would have enabled them to defeat Spinola himself, the greatest general of the age, had they been passionately inspired by one faith. In October of 1620 Spinola and a Spanish army pounced like devouring tigers, not upon Bohemia, which James had believed was their objective, but upon the Palatinate itself, capturing the fortress town of Kreuznach. Frederic found that he had accepted a crown of sorrows, but with a courage and a pride that was not without nobility, though it cost many thousands of honest lives, he refused to surrender what the Bohemian people had unanimously given to him.

When James learnt that, in spite of all that the Spanish ambassador had given him to believe, the Spaniards had invaded the actual territory of his son-in-law, he was moved to hysterical rage, and turned upon the man who had deceived him, as he thought, with false assurances. For the first time he decided for resolute action on behalf of his daughter's husband, and he had behind him the intense and passionate sympathy of every English Protestant. Buckingham, easily swayed by the mood of the moment, forgot his favour of a Spanish alliance, and was all for war. The Prince was no less eager, and young English gentlemen, stirred by a love of adventure, and some of them with a chivalrous desire to defend the Protestant faith in Germany, poured out to the Palatinate with the offer of their swords. The King's Council resolved to raise a "Benevolence" in order to provide an army, and the Prince of Wales led the fund by £5000, Buckingham promising £1000, and the other councillors putting themselves down for subscriptions in proportion to their wealth and rank. But though the nation was in a warlike mood, subscriptions did not flow in as readily as the Council had hoped. There were men in England who were already preparing the way for Hampden, and did not admit the legality of a forced war. There were many more who were quick to open their hearts to the distressed Protestants of Germany, but slow to open their purses. So it was found

necessary to call a Parliament, and when it met it was, as we have seen, more ready to examine into abuses of the realm, and to impeach the Ministers of the Crown for corruption, than to grant subsidies. Yet, in return for the surrender of the King and Buckingham over the patents, they voted supplies to the extent of £160,000, and though this was far short of the half-million which had been asked for, it was enough to raise a very formidable force. An army of adventurers went out to enlist under Frederic's banners, and some of the bravest feats of the war were done by these English gentlemen. But it was a horrible and disastrous campaign. In October of 1620 the Bohemians had been massacred outside the walls of Prague, and on the following day Frederic fled into the passes of the Silesian mountains. From that time defeat followed defeat, and retreat retreat, until Frederic, the son-in-law of the English King, was a fugitive without a home, and without a crown.

In all the warlike preparations in England, which had but a feeble issue, and in all the ceaseless diplomacy of the German, Dutch, and Spanish agents in London, the former urging the King to move the whole strength of the nation to defend Protestantism in Europe, the latter holding him back by cajolery and threats, Buckingham played a vacillating part. In the first stages of the war, after the invasion of the Palatinate, he was one of the most ardent of the war party, but his energies were more engaged in securing commands for his own friends, such as Sir Edward Cecil, who had done brave service in the Low Countries—in which he was not always successful—than in formulating a definite and strong policy of war in the Cabinet. Later he cooled down, and became more and more under the influence of the wily little Spanish diplomatist, who with equal audacity and ingenuity had kept the King from breaking altogether with his friendly relations to Spain. When Frederic had lost everything, Gondomar persuaded the King that the only hope for his son-in-law was an alliance between England and Spain, with the restitution of the Palatinate as part of the bargain, and the marriage negotiations, which had been interrupted, but never wholly abandoned, owing to the religious war in Germany, were now renewed more seriously.

Certainly, Gondomar was the evil genius of England at this time, though an evil genius who was also a charming gentleman,



COUNT GONDOMAR
AFTER THE PORTRAIT BY G. P. HARDING

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ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS.

a courteous, witty, and genial soul, and not therefore less dangerous. Upon coming to the English Court, he had quite won the heart of James by listening with inexhaustible patience to his hunting stories, and by constant and careful flattery of his pedantic wisdom. He had also made close friends with the young Prince and with Buckingham, who, before the trouble in the Palatinate, had found his gaiety and his grace quite irresistible. With the ladies he was specially a favourite, and this increased his influence, the Court being under petticoat government in social ways even in James's days. He lived in Ely Place in Holborn, and his passage to the Court, says Arthur Wilson, was ordinarily through Drury Lane (Covent Garden being then an enclosed field), and that Lane, and the Strand, being the places where most of the quality lived, the ladies, as he went, knowing his time, would stand in their balconies and windows to watch him pass, to flutter handkerchiefs, and give their smiles to the gay little Spaniard, who waved to them from his coach.

He was just the man to find favour with Geordie Villiers, and good diplomatist as he was, in spite of his social charm, or because of it, he used this friendship with the Favourite to whisper a hint in his ear. Prince Charles was old enough to marry, and correspondence was a weary thing to settle a treaty in which love was the stake. Why not bring the Prince to Spain, so that he might see the Infanta before definitely engaging himself? She was a beautiful girl, worth seeing, and once in Madrid, there would be no difficulty in arranging terms of marriage. It would be a gay adventure, and Buckingham would get all the credit of it.

To George Villiers the idea appealed wonderfully. It touched his imagination. He saw already the brilliant Court of Spain dazzled by his magnificence. He saw himself loaded with new honours, and securing for ever the gratitude of the Prince, who would one day be king. Doubtless, also, he honestly believed, as the King was induced to believe, that if the match were concluded the Spaniards would restore the Palatinate, though not Bohemia, to the son-in-law of King James and the brother-in-law of their Princess's husband. This seemed the only chance of restoration. Digby, Lord Bristol, who, as our ambassador in Spain, and our wisest and noblest diplomatist, had gained the sincere friendship of the Spanish King and

Court, had failed, in spite of that, to arrest the progress of Spanish arms in Frederic's territory, and when he had gone on a special mission to Vienna to intercede for the fugitive monarch, he had failed again to arrange a compromise between the Austrian House and the Elector, who still claimed sovereignty over the revolted subjects of Bohemia. But where Digby's diplomacy had failed, it was possible, so George Villiers thought, that the sentiment of a chivalrous adventurer and of a Royal marriage might be successful.

Yes, Gondomar's suggestion was good, and full of romantic possibilities for Buckingham to play the gallant in. Letters passed between Gondomar and the Favourite, between Gondomar and his own Court, between Buckingham and Bristol, our ambassador in Spain, with whom the idea found little encouragement. The proposed journey was kept secret from the King and all others, though formal negotiations for a marriage treaty were now in active progress. Gondomar played his cards well, and he kept Buckingham's mind fastened to the adventurous idea by artful flattery, by exciting his vanity, and by promises to smooth over any religious difficulties in the way of a contract between the Catholic Infanta and the Protestant Prince. Buckingham believed that Gondomar spoke with full authority from the Spanish Court, and entered into a secret agreement with him, to which Prince Charles was a party. To the Prince the idea was no less appealing in its romance, and the influence of Buckingham's magnetic personality and infectious enthusiasm made Charles an easy victim in the hands of his two counsellors.

Gondomar left England in the summer of 1622, and when he said good-bye to all his friends at the English Court they knew that his business at home would be to press forward the long-discussed match. But the majority of English courtiers were doubtful that the marriage would ever take place. One of them, the King's kinsman and trusted friend, old Ludowic Stuart, Duke of Lennox, and afterwards Duke of Richmond, a Scottish nobleman of the old type of rugged chivalry, put a blunt question to Gondomar before he left. "My lord," he said, "deal plainly with me; shall we have a match or no?"

But the one thing impossible to the little Spanish Count was plain dealing, and his answer to the Duke was long and full of

"ifs" and "buts." He protested that the King of Spain was serious in his intentions, and had already proceeded far in the business, and made great promises, which to doubt would be to do him a great wrong. But of course he could not give his dearly beloved daughter to the Prince without safeguarding her religious liberty, and that of her followers. Ludowic Stuart listened to much garrulity of the same kind, and when the little Spaniard had gone, turned to his friends and declared that nothing would come of this proposed marriage.

Philip III. died, and Philip IV., his son, reigned in his stead. New negotiations were set on foot between the two Courts, and Gondomar, writing from Madrid, encouraged the King and his two "sweete boys" to think that there were now but few difficulties in the way. In September of 1622 he wrote to James, that "with all seriousness, I will discover to you the great desire of the King, my master, not only for the conclusion of this business, but also that it should be concluded with all brevity, and that the points touching to religion give so much satisfaction to the Pope, that he may not only grant us the dispensation we desire, but that he may be obliged to grant it. And I assure you, that here we are disposing and facilitating all in the best possible way, for Mons. Don Balthazar de Zuniga has undertaken the negociation of this affair with particular and great affection. And since it chiefly depends upon your Majesty and his highness the Prince (God preserve him), one cannot doubt of the brief conclusion of it; and in case there should be any cause to doubt, I will declare at once, and will say with reason, that the fault of it will fall upon your Majesty and his Highness; for the rest, I refer to that which my Lord Digby will write to you, who in truth proceeds here with great care and prudence."

There was not a word in this letter to James of the proposed journey to Spain of the Prince and Buckingham. Gondomar knew that such a proposal would alarm the King beyond measure. For he believed that Buckingham's personal influence over James and Charles would carry this point, and in the same month, of September, 1622, he wrote to the Favourite a letter which reveals the secret agreement between them, and in which he endeavoured to allay any scruples that Buckingham might have.

"MY GOOD LORD,

"I may say to your Excellency with great sincerity that I write to you at all times and at all hours with the willingness and remembrance of a cordial love and respect which I feel and owe to your Excellency; and God knows the pleasure it would give me to walk with you in the open gallery which leads from your Excellency's chamber to the palace on the Thames, for there are subjects which are more fit for personal communication than to be entrusted to writing, and especially in the French language. What I may say and do in every language is that the King my master desires the marriage of his sister with the Prince of Wales with a steady and constant resolve; and that on all sides the doubt proposed by the Pope should be facilitated and satisfied, and that all should be finished by the post. Indeed in the short time that has elapsed since my arrival here, it has been impossible to do more, and much has been done. And thus I trust in God we shall soon see each other here in this country, and embrace each other according to the agreement, and together joyously return to Great Britain. All the rest I entrust to Mr. Cottington, who is to depart next week (if it please God), and by him Mons. le Comte de Olivares and Mons. Don Balthazar de Zuniga will reply to the favour of your letter, which they have estimated as they should do. So I will not trouble your Excellency any more to-day, but will only beg you to kiss the hands most affectionately on my part and on the part of the Countess my wife, of Madame la Comtesse, your mother, and Madame la Marquise, and little Mary Villiers. May God give her many brothers, and preserve her father as many happy years as I desire.

"From your Excellency's very humble

"and very affectionate servant

"Madrid, September 20, 1622

"In my room I have the portrait of the Marquis of Buckingham, my good lord and true friend, and all the world says that he has the countenance of a good fellow.—GONDOMAR"*

During the autumn of 1622 and in the New Year of 1623 letters continued to pass between the two Courts on the subject

* Bishop Goodman's "Memoirs."

of the proposed marriage, and Buckingham, who had quite won over the Prince to the idea of the journey to Madrid to fetch back his bride (though not a word had been breathed to James), began to weary of his protracted correspondence. The Infanta would grow old before she became a wife! So thought Baby Charles and dog Steenie, two impatient young men, when they had an unfulfilled desire.

It was on a morning in February of 1623 that the King's "sweete boys" went to their "dear dad" and bound him over to secrecy before they revealed a new plan they had in mind. The Prince then went down on his knees and unfolded his warm desire to go to Spain in person to fetch back his bride, while Buckingham stood by carelessly as if he had very little to do with the idea, saving in friendship to the Prince. But the King, after hearing his son, his emotion stirred as usual by any appeal to his affections, turned to the Marquis with a questioning face, as though anxious to hear what he had to say. Buckingham then launched forth at large, not discussing the prudence of the proposition, but dilating on the infinite obligation the King would confer on his son by yielding to his amorous passion, with which he was possessed. He vowed that if this humble request were refused, the Prince would be sorely cast down in spirit, and would, he feared, look upon it as the greatest affliction that could befall him in this world.*

The Prince took up the cue, and protested that such a plan would smooth over all the difficulties that had been put in the way of the marriage. His presence in Madrid would soon settle the terms of the treaty, and he would guarantee that it would result in the restitution of the Palatinate to his sister's husband, which, after the Prince's own happiness, was the thing most passionately desired by the King.

"These discourses," says Lord Clarendon, who describes the details of this scene, "urged with all the artifice and address imaginable, so far wrought upon and prevailed with the King, that with less hesitation than his nature was accustomed to, and much less than was agreeable to his great wisdom, he gave his approbation, and promised that the prince should make the journey he was so much inclined to."

Having extracted this promise from poor old James, the two

* Clarendon.

young men went on to explain the details of their scheme. There had been some talk formerly of the fleet going to Spain under Buckingham as admiral, and it was with the idea that the Prince should sail to the Spanish coast that the King had yielded. But now it was explained that these two young men were not prepared to wait until the fleet could be got ready, but proposed to set out secretly, and to ride overland to Spain through France, *incognito*, reaching the frontier before they should be missed at Whitehall. To these further details James listened doubtfully, but having been worked up to a feeling of paternal fondness, he did not immediately repent of his consent.

It was only when he retired to his own rooms, postponing the consultation till the next day, that the poor old man gradually became terrified at the thought of this extraordinary adventure. He then realized how full of danger it all was, how likely to offend the people and the Court, how probable it was that the Spaniards would take advantage of the Prince's presence to coerce him into conditions repugnant to the principles of his own nation. God knows what might happen. Princes before now had been kept prisoners in foreign countries.

The journey through France in disguise was full of possible perils. In any case, the absence of the Heir from England would be a source of grave anxiety to the whole country, and the loss of his two boys a great grief to their old dad and gossip. A thousand vague fears floated up in the King's mind, filling him with a sense of impending calamity, and robbing him of all peace and quiet of mind.

When Charles and Buckingham waited on him the next day, "he fell into a great passion of tears," says Clarendon, "and told them that he was undone, and that it would break his heart if they pursued in their resolution." He put before them all the fears that had oppressed him over-night, and pointed out to them how disastrously their journey might end.

But the two young men were as obstinate as youth often is when set upon any course of action. They did not take the pains to answer the King's arguments. Charles reminded his father of his "sacred promise." Buckingham, knowing the weakness of the master who had made him, treated him with insolent and bullying behaviour. He vowed that nobody would believe any word the King spoke if he drew back from a promise

so solemnly made, and swore that he must have already broken his word by which he had pledged himself to secrecy, for some scoundrel must have provided him with all these pitiful arguments. If that were so, Buckingham would find the man out and take vengeance on him. Meanwhile, if the King withdrew his promise, it would be such an offence to the Prince, who had now set his heart on the journey, that he would never forget it, nor forgive any man who had been the cause of it.

James shrank before this blustering insolence from the man he loved so well, and seeing the advantage, Buckingham and Charles thereupon discussed the details of the journey as though it were now a settled thing, and mentioned that they were taking with them Sir Francis Cottington, the Prince's secretary, who had been long in residence at the Court of Spain, where he had gained great credit for his obliging behaviour and honesty, and Endymion Porter, who in his youth had been a page in the household of Olivares, the Spanish Prime Minister, and had also travelled recently with despatches between the two Courts.

James seized the chance of sending for Cottington at once, and when he came, knowing nothing of the secret, the King, in a broken voice, told him that he had always been an honest man, and therefore he was now to trust him in an affair of the highest importance, which he was not upon his life to disclose to any one.

"Cottington," he said, after this preface, "here is baby Charles and Steeny, who have a great mind to go by post into Spain, to fetch home the Infanta, and will have but two more in their company, and have chosen you for one. What think you of the journey?"

Francis Cottington, staggered by this astounding news, fell into such a fit of trembling that he could hardly speak. But upon the King asking him again what he thought of the journey, he blurted out that it would be a fatal mistake, and would undo all that had been done towards the marriage, because, having the Prince in their hands, the Spaniards would make new demands, which could not be acceptable to the English.

Hearing this, the King threw himself on to his bed in an agony of grief. "I told you this before," he cried. "I am undone. I shall lose my baby Charles!" *

* Clarendon.

its flickering torches, talking over the adventure that would begin with the coming of another day. We can imagine Buckingham, fired with excitement, laughing gaily at his wife's timid fears, playing the gracious host and familiar friend to that Prince whom he had beguiled into this knight-errantry, and Charles himself, with his pale dignity, his grave lustrous eyes, smiling a little at his friend's vivacity, giving thanks with his exquisite courtesy for the sweet service of his hostess, and permitting himself, when alone with Buckingham, to show some anxiety as to what should happen after this night. But we can only guess at this, and see in imagination how, next morning early, Kate clung to her husband as he kissed her good-bye, and whispered her to keep a good heart, and believe in his love and faithfulness towards her. The best part of Buckingham was his domestic affections, and from his letters and Kate's we know that there was a very deep tenderness between the husband and wife. There was no doubt some tearing at his heartstrings when he waved hands to her as she stood on the steps of New Hall.

But it was a day in February and spring was in the air, and before Buckingham and the Prince, who bent low over his horse to give his white hand to Mistress Villiers, there was a gallant and joyous errantry, with some dragons in the path, perhaps, but, beyond, a beautiful Princess, the magnificence of an Imperial Court, and all the merry sport of intrigue and adventure. So it was with gaiety that Buckingham rode by the Prince's saddle into the pale gleam of the February sun.

There was another with them now, Sir Richard Graham, master of horse to the Lord Marquis, "and of inward trust about him." * These three rode on swiftly towards Gravesend. The Prince and the Marquis had now disguised themselves by putting on false beards, and dubbed themselves "Thomas and John Smith." To princes and great lords it is as piquant to pose as plain gentlemen as it is for these to give themselves fictitious titles, and no doubt Prince Charles and his friend made very merry with their new humility of rank.

Getting to the river by Gravesend, they had their first alarm. This was due, not, as is common with adventurers, to lack of money, but to an excess of wealth. Buckingham, with all his

* Wotton.

forethought, had forgotten to change any of his gold into silver, and when it came to paying the ferryman to take them across, they were fain to give him a piece of two-and-twenty shillings. Such a fare was like a miracle to the boatman, who would have tugged his forelock for a groat. "It struck the poor fellow into such a melting tenderness that so good gentlemen should be going (for so he suspected) about some quarrel beyond sea, as he could not forbear to acquaint the officers of the town with what had befallen him." *

It was with some trouble that the little cavalcade got free of such solicitude, but they rode away from their pursuers, and through the old High Street of Rochester.

When they got to the brow of the hill beyond that city they had a new and nasty shock. Coming towards them was a lumbering coach, panelled with the Royal arms, and an escort of gentlemen on horseback. To their consternation, Buckingham and the Prince recognized this little procession to be the train of an ambassador from Spain, escorted by Sir Lewis Lewknor and Sir Henry Mainwaring.† If they came face to face, they would be discovered at once, in spite of false beards, and this thought seized them so forcibly that, as Sir Henry Wotton says, with a touch of humour, it "made them baulk the beaten road, and teach post-hacknies to leap hedges."

Their laughter must have rung out heartily when the noise of the rumbling wheels and horses' hoofs died off in the distance, but at the time, reining up their horses behind the shelter of the hedges, they had had some anxious moments with bated breath.

From Rochester the three horsemen went on to Canterbury, riding under the shadow of the Cathedral, along a way where in earlier England a constant stream of pilgrims had thronged towards the shrine of Becket. Here they put up for refreshment at a hostelry, but as they were taking fresh horses they were startled by the sudden arrival of the Mayor with some of his officers, who, with blunt speech and with all the pomposity of his office, said he must arrest them. It was a curious incident, mysterious to the travellers, but the explanation of it is that Mainwaring, suspecting the runaway horsemen to be conspirators, sent a messenger to Canterbury with orders to have them

* Wotton.

† Wotton says it was the French ambassador, but this is a mistake.

stopped. The Mayor lied a little on his own account in his zeal to carry out his instructions, though it is clear that he neither knew nor guessed the identity of the travellers. First he said he had a warrant from the Council to stop them. Then, argued down on this point, alleged that he had one from Sir Lewis Lewknor, the master of the ceremonies. This must have tickled the Prince and Buckingham, for to be arrested on the order of this professor of etiquette and merry gentleman would be like the King arrested by his Court Fool. But the Mayor then played his best card, and seeing that his jest had produced levity, said bluntly that Sir Henry Mainwaring, the Lieutenant of Dover Castle, had given him orders to stop these three horsemen.

Sir Henry Wotton, who gives the most detailed narrative of the first part of this journey, though with some inaccuracies, says that "at all this confused fiction the Marquis had no leisure to laugh, but thought best to dismask his beard, and so told him that he was going covertly with such slight company to take a secret view (being Admiral) of the forwardness of His Majesty's fleet, which was then in preparation on the narrow seas. This, with so much ado, did somewhat handsomely heal the disguisement."

So, breathing again after this perilous interruption, the travellers pushed on and reached Dover that night. On the way the "baggage post-boy," who had been at Court, "got a glimmering who they were, but his mouth was easily shut."

There was stormy weather at sea, and a gale blowing overhead, when Prince Charles, Steenie, and Graham reached their port, after a long day's ride. There was no prospect of crossing until the morning, but the three men must have been glad of a good excuse to stretch their legs in a comfortable inn and dine with ease.

Two friends were waiting for them, having been sent secretly in advance to provide a vessel for the Channel passage. These were Sir Francis Cottington, Secretary to the Prince, who had so raised Buckingham's displeasure by his opposition to the journey, and Mr. Endymion Porter. Sir Francis had been chosen to accompany Prince Charles, partly, as we have seen, because the King trusted his experience and steady wisdom, and also because he was familiar with the Court of Spain. Endymion

Porter, who had also been in Spain, and had a perfect knowledge of the language, belonged to the Prince's bedchamber, and was close in his master's confidence. He was also Buckingham's good servant, and had conducted his correspondence with Spain over this proposed marriage. Indeed, he had previously gone on to prepare the way for this journey, which was not so secret, or unexpected by the Spanish Court, as it is commonly supposed. There was a certain romance in the character and person of this gentleman which made him a fitting companion to two such travellers as the stately Charles and the magnificent Marquis. He was a poet of some tenderness and grace, and used a good fortune to extend a brotherly patronage to other poets poorer than he. Afterwards, in the troublous times of Charles's reign, he was unswervingly faithful to the Royalist cause, and suffered severe poverty and exile for his fidelity. There is a portrait of him in the National Gallery, which shows that he had a handsome, oval face, rather womanish in its softness, with flowing brown hair and luminous eyes—a typical cavalier poet.

In the inn at Dover there was now a party of five, "the whole Parade of the Journey," says Wotton, and the next morning they got on board ship. Bishop Goodman says that an order was given by the Prince and Buckingham to stop the ports, so that there should be no passage for eight or ten days. Buckingham, as Lord Admiral of the Fleet, could give such an order, but if he did so the journey could no longer be a secret, and from a passage in Lord Herbert of Cherbury's autobiography it is clear that the presence of the Prince was unsuspected in Dover.

At five o'clock on Wednesday morning the vessel put to sea, and during the first part of the passage both Charles and Buckingham were very sea-sick.* At two o'clock in the afternoon of the same day their vessel put in at Boulogne, where the five Englishmen landed, taking horses at once, and riding hard, "like men of dispatch," until they reached Montreuil that night. Here they put up, but on the second day continued their journey to Paris.

They did not get there without some repetition of those encounters which had broken the road on the way to Dover.

* Letter from the Prince and Marquis to James. (Goodman's "Memoirs.")

An English gentleman returning to his own country met the travellers and stared hard at them in their rich dress; stopping before two of the horsemen riding behind, whom he believed to be in their company, he said, "I pray, where are the Prince and the Marquis going?" "Truly," was the answer, "I left them both at Court." "Truly," said the gentleman, "yonder is a couple as like them as ever I saw in my life."

When about three posts before Paris, they met two German gentlemen who had seen the Prince and the Marquis taking coach together when they had been in England at Newmarket, and remembered them so well that they could not help believing they recognized them. They argued the matter out with Richard Graham, but he outfaced them so steadily, and laughed so heartily at their mistake, as he called it, that they went off at last, though not wholly convinced against the evidence of their eyes.*

It was the first time Prince Charles had been to Paris, that city of magnificence and squalor, of great palaces and many churches, of narrow streets with gabled houses and innumerable inns, the very capital of romance and passionate adventure, where love and death went hand-in-hand, and political intrigue in the Court had for its tools the poor devils of the taverns.

"This town," says Howell, describing the Paris of this time in his "Familiar Letters," that ever-delightful book of gossip, "is always dirty, and 'tis such a dirt, that by perpetual motion is beaten into such black unctuous oil that where it sticks no art can wash it off. . . . Besides the stain this dirt leaves, it gives also so strong a scent that it may be smelt many miles off if the wind be in one's face as he comes from the fresh air of the country."

Buckingham knew Paris well, having spent a year or more of his youth here, and he piloted his Prince and companions to an inn in the Rue St. Jacques, where they could have quiet and comfort. Here, after scribbling a letter to the old dad and gossip in England, who would be eating his heart out to hear from them, they sallied forth to see the sights. To disguise their faces, which might be recognized by many French gentlemen who had been to England, they bought two full wigs, and wearing these the King's governor and his son succeeded, through the customary politeness of the French to English visitors, in getting a

* Wotton, Goodman.

glimpse of the Queen-mother, the great, and now very fat, Marie de Medicis, the wife of Henri IV., and the strong-willed mother of Louis XIII., a young man who had been deliberately brought up in ignorance, but who was now asserting his sovereign will under the guidance of his friend and first minister, De Luynes.

The Queen-mother was at dinner when Prince Charles and Buckingham passed through her chamber, availing themselves of that extraordinary privilege belonging to the Parisians to see the Blood Royal at table—a fashion which afterwards gave such acute annoyance to Marie Antoinette. In the evening they obtained admission to a masked ball at Court, where all the magnificence and beauty of Paris were displayed. The young Princess Henrietta, the King's sister, was there, and Charles first looked upon the beautiful young creature who was afterwards to be his Queen, though he was on his way to woo another. And Buckingham's eyes, roving round the painted chamber where the lords and ladies of France were dancing, saw the fair girl-queen Anne of Austria, sister to Philip of Spain and to the Infanta, with whom at a later period, on another visit to France, he dared to enter into an amorous intrigue.

Returning to the inn in the Rue St. Jacques, flushed with the excitement of these scenes, the Prince and the Marquis sent another brief letter to James:—

"SIR,

"Since the closing of our last, we have been at Court again (and that we might not hold you in pain we assure you we have not been known) where we saw the young Queen, little Monsieur, and Madame, at the practising of a mask that is intended by the Queen to be presented to the King, and in it there danced the Queen and Madames, with as many as made up nineteen fair dancing ladies, amongst which the Queen is the handsomest, which hath wrought in us a greater desire to see her sister. So, in haste, going to bed, we humbly take our leaves and rest.

"Your Majesty's most humble and obedient son and servant,

"CHARLES

"And your humble slave-dog,

"STEENIE

"PARIS, the 22nd of February, 1624"

The assurance in this letter that they "have not been known" was not the real truth, though the truth to them. Two young men of such striking figure and rich apparel could not easily pass unrecognized, and coincidence often frustrates caution. One of the first persons to discover their identity was a maid who had been a milliner in London, and cried out as Charles passed her in the street, "Certainly this is the Prince of Wales!" But she was discreet enough to say no more about it then, and, writes Lord Herbert of Cherbury, "presumed not to follow him." But others of higher rank than a milliner's maid recognized the Prince and his companion, and it is probable that when these two were watching the mask at Court sharp eyes were upon them, piercing their disguise.

That fire-eating little Welshman Lord Herbert was then in Paris as our Ambassador, and it was natural that Buckingham, who had a great affection for him, and to whom he owed his office, should have suggested sending for him. This was discussed at the time, but after some dispute it was concluded in the negative; the reasons being that if the Ambassador came on foot as a private person, he might be seen and followed by some spy curious to know the end of this humble walk, whereas if he came with his usual train, his gentlemen would recognize the Prince and the Marquis, and might divulge the secret.

The first news that reached the Ambassador's ears was when, late on the same night, a Scotsman named Andrews came to his rooms and asked him if he had seen the Prince. "What Prince?" said the testy little knight. Upon hearing that it was the Prince of Wales he refused to believe it, until the Scot "with many oaths" affirmed that it was indeed Prince Charles, and that he, Andrews, was charged to follow his highness, begging the Ambassador, on the part of the King his master, to serve the Prince's passage through France as well as he could. Thrown into great excitement by the news, Lord Herbert got up very early next morning, and, making his way to the mansion of the chief Secretary of State, Puisieux, demanded an immediate audience. The minister sent word that he begged the ambassador to stay for an hour, as he was himself in bed, and had some important business to despatch for the King, his master. Edward Herbert was not a man to be fudged off with excuses, and he sent back word to say that

he could not stay a minute, and that he desired to go to Monsieur Puisieux's bedside. This made the minister get up and put on his gown, and so went to the chamber where the ambassador was waiting.

"His first words to me," writes Lord Herbert, in his "Memoirs," "were, 'I know your business as well as you; your Prince is departed this morning post to Spain,' adding further, that I could demand nothing for the security of his passage, but it should be presently granted, concluding with these very words, '*Vous serez servi au point nommé,*' or 'You shall be served in any particular you name,' I told him that his free offer had prevented the request I intended to make, and that because he was principal minister of State, I doubted not but that he had so nobly promised he would see punctually performed; as for the security of his passage that I did not see what I could demand more than that he would suffer him quietly to hold his way without sending after or interrupting him. He replied that the Prince should not be interrupted, though yet he could no less than send to know what success the Prince had in his journey."

This was a very graceful way of saying that the Prince and his companions would be closely shadowed through France as far as the Spanish frontier, and we may imagine that some young gentleman, or gentlemen, of the guard left the Louvre early in the morning, with strict orders to ride hard on the tracks of the Prince's party. What a gay adventure for a D'Artagnan!

Lord Herbert also sent a messenger after them at post speed, desiring the Prince to make all the haste he could out of France, and counselling him, as he would be closely watched, not to have conversation with any of "the religion" (that is, the Huguenot party), as he might be detained if he gave any cause of suspicion.

The innkeepers on the way to Spain must have been astonished and well pleased at the number of mysterious horsemen who were hurrying one after the other, and throwing away gold in their anxiety to press on with their steeds. Another English lord soon came riding hard for Spain, and not alone, as this one had no cause for secrecy, and loved the glitter of a cavalcade. His coming was advised to the Prince and Buckingham by a letter from the King.

"Sweet boys," wrote James, "the news of your going is

already so blown abroad, as I am forced for your safety to post this bearer [James Hay, Earl of Carlisle] after you, who will give you his best advice and attendance in your journey. God bless you both, my sweet babes, and send you a safe and happy return."

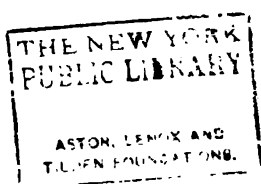
Poor James had already been bitterly reproached by his lords when the secret had "blown abroad." At Newmarket, where rumour met them, the Privy Councillors fell on their knees before him and implored him to say whether it was true. Then James confessed, what seemed so wildly incredible. Hiding his own fears with grandiloquent language, he talked loftily about a general peace in Christendom which would result from this mission of love. But to prevent danger he promised to send Lord Carlisle to Paris to arrange a safe conduct for the Prince through France. But he could not stifle the bitter reproaches of his noblemen, and some of them did not hesitate to accuse Buckingham of high treason for his part in this wild adventure. Others and younger ones, however, less serious in their views, hastened to follow such a gay enterprise.

The Lord Cherbury's house in Paris afterwards became a kind of caravanserai for all those of the English Court who, as soon as the secret was out, desired to join the Prince, and passed through France to Spain, and by one of them the Ambassador, who must have been very sore at not having been admitted to the secret of his Prince's stay in Paris, did not fail to let that young man know how hurt he, Edward Herbert, had been on this account—"which occasioned his Highness afterwards to write a letter to me wholly with his own hand, and subscribe his name 'your friend Charles,' in which he did abundantly satisfy all unkindness I might conceive on this occasion."

The first of those to pass over to France, and to ride on the track of Charles and Buckingham to Spain, was, as we have seen, the Earl of Carlisle. With him went the Lord Mountjoy and others, "to excuse the Prince's passing through France without leave or kissing the King's hand there." Then from that industrious letter-writer Mr. Mead we learn, under the date of March 14th, that "the Lords Andover, Vaughan, and Kensington (Henry Rich) went hence also twelve days ago that way, overland for Spaine. The beginning of the next week there go likewise hence about two hundred persons more of



JAMES HAY, EARL OF CARLISLE
AFTER THE PORTRAIT BY VANDYCK



nobles, knightes, gentlemen, and others (of which Dr. Man and Mr. Wren) towards Portsmouth, there to imbarque in two shippes, one of the King's, another a marchant's ship, for St. Sebastian's, afterwards to ryde overland to Madride. It's sayd also my LL. the Bishops of St. Asaph and Exeter also goe, either now or in May, with the Fleet, and have a thousand apiece given them," etc.

Meanwhile, or rather before these later arrivals and happenings, the King's "sweet boys, and dear venturous knights, worthy to be put in a romanso" (as he calls them in one of his letters), rode with their companions across France, a gallant party of gentlemen wearing "fine riding coats, all of one colour and fashion, in a kind of noble simplicity."

There was some trouble in avoiding the hospitality of great French nobles on their country estates—men who loved good company, and with the generous magnificence of the *ancien régime* at its best, delighted to entertain noble strangers passing through their lands. One of them, the Duke D'Épernon, pressed them to favour him with their company, and would hardly take a refusal, until Francis Cottington assured him they were persons of such low degree as to be unfit for such noble company. The Duke must have seen the irony of this, but he was too much of a gentleman to intrude his hospitality further upon unwilling guests.

There were some merry adventures on that long road to Spain. French provincial inns in the reign of the Thirteenth Louis were not luxurious, and Charles and Steenie slept in many poor places and ate frugal fare. They saw the poverty of provincial France, and the desolation that followed a religious war, with ruined homesteads, and wretched cripples who had once been soldiers, and poor women who had suffered from the horrors of such a war. They passed young gentlemen, like the Gascon D'Artagnan, riding on rough cobs towards Paris and their fortune; and rascals like Gil Blas singing on the way between one town and another, where they would be barber, or valet, or secretary to a Bishop, or the lover of a waiting-maid; and beggarly poets of the type of François Villon, who would write a scurrilous ballad to earn a meal, or a haunting sonnet for an insubstantial smile. But whatever the company, or the fare, or the shelter, the hearts of Prince Charles and his friends

were high, for all this was a great adventure, good for the blood. Their temper may be guessed from a merry anecdote of a little incident near Bayonne, told by Sir Henry Wotton:—

“They were now entered into the town of Trent, and could get no flesh in their inns; whereupon fell out a pleasant passage (if I may insert it by the way among more serious);—There was near Bayon a heard of goats with their young ones; on which sight Sir Richard Graham (master of the horse to the marquis) tells the marquis he could snap one of the kids, and make some shift to carry him close to their lodgings, which the prince overhearing, ‘Why, Richard,’ says he, ‘do you think you may practise here your old tricks again upon the Border?’ upon which word they first gave the Goat-herd good contentment, and then while the marquis and his servants, being both on foot, were chasing the kid about the flock, the Prince from horseback killed him in the head with a Scottish pistol.”

Arriving at Bayonne, they had their first serious interruption from the authorities. The Governor, M. de Gramont, made pertinacious inquiries as to their whence and whither, and not having, as he afterwards confessed to his friend, Herbert of Cherbury, the slightest idea as to the persons before him, gave them a great deal of trouble and anxiety before he would let them proceed.

A little way out of Bayonne the party met a messenger from the Earl of Bristol, one Gresly by name, carrying despatches to England. These were opened, but found to be mainly in cipher. One, however, which they could read was not encouraging, for Bristol wrote that “God knows when” the dispensation for the marriage would arrive from the Pope. Gresly afterwards reported in England that Buckingham looked very weary and harassed after his long ride, though he had never seen the Prince so merry. He danced for joy when he crossed the boundary into Spain.

Buckingham, as he came within sight of Spain, may well have been a little harassed, thinking no more for the time of the adventurous pleasure of this expedition, and remembering the responsibilities on his shoulders. The Heir of the English Crown was in his charge—this journey was his idea, and upon the success or failure of it his own reputation at home would be made or marred. He had plunged into the adventure with a

gay heart, but at the end of this knight-errantry was a grave and serious business of diplomacy, which would need skilful handling. But not yet did either Buckingham or the Prince know the troubles and vexations in store for them ; and knowing the character of George Villiers, we may guess that if he harboured any pessimistic thoughts for a while, he quickly tossed them on one side, and rode forward with gay hope into the sunshine of Spain.

CHAPTER VII

IN OLD MADRID

IT was on the evening of Friday, March 7th, 1623, that two of the travellers arrived in old Madrid. Buckingham and the young Prince, leaving their companions half a day's journey behind, went straight to Digby's house, and while Charles "staid awhile on t'other side of the street, in the dark, Buckingham, with a portmanteau under his arm, knocked at the ambassador's door, and announced himself as Mr. Thomas Smith, a messenger with important news.* The servant said his lord had retired into his study, and was then busy with his papers, so that he would not be disturbed; but upon Buckingham's importunity the porter admitted him, and he was taken through the Countess's chamber to the Earl of Bristol's room.†

Digby, writing to the King, his master, three days later, thus describes this surprise visit:—

"Upon Friday, which was the 7th of this month," he says, "about eight o'clock at night, the Prince and my Lord of Buckingham, without any company but their postilion, arrived at my house; where my Lord Marquis meeting at the door with Henry Jermyn, a son of Sir Thomas Jermyn's, told him that his name was Smith, and that he had met my servant Gresly by the way, who had fallen into thieves' hands, by whom he had been very ill-used, and had all his letters taken away; he said he had got a fall, and hurt one of his legs, so that he could not come upstairs but with great pain. Whilst Henry Jermyn was making this relation unto me, Sire, Digby went to see who it was, and knew my Lord of Buckingham; but dissembled it so well, that before I could come to him, he had got him up to his chamber, and

* Howell.

† Letter of Mr. Mead to Sir Martin Stuteville.

went presently down to the Prince (who stood all this while in the street with his postilion) and brought him likewise so handsomely up to his chamber, that there I found them both together, and we carried the business so dexterously that that night they were undiscovered by any, till the next morning, by the coming of Mr. Secretary Cottington and Endymion Porter, the secret was revealed."

To the Earl of Bristol the visit of the Prince and his Favourite, dropping down upon him like this out of the night, was an unpleasant surprise and shock. A man of sincere patriotism, and England's most skilful diplomatist, he knew all the difficulties and dangers of the proposed match, and for a long time now he had been handling the business of his master at the Court of Spain with cautious zeal, and with a finesse which was not outmatched by the subtlety of Olivares, the all-powerful minister of Philip IV. But this appearance of the Prince upset all his diplomacy, for with Charles coming like a knight-errant to claim his bride in person, it would be more than ever difficult to negotiate with Spain for a marriage contract which would be acceptable to the English nation. His personal prestige was also touched. He knew Buckingham, his impetuosity, his arrogance, his desire for self-glory, and it was gall to him that this Favourite, who had no knowledge of diplomacy and no grain of caution, should arrive like this to take the whole business out of the Ambassador's hands, and ride roughshod over his influence in Spain. But Bristol, like a wise man, did not at this stage show any of the anxiety and annoyance that consumed him. He behaved to his Prince and his Prince's friend with the exquisite courtesy of a Stuart gentleman, and played the new game with a noble grace. He sent word immediately to Count Gondomar that the Marquis of Buckingham was in Madrid, and a little later gave the news to the King, also adding that doubtless the Prince had come with him. The wily Gondomar must have smiled in his sleeve, or openly, upon receiving this message. The plot had been born in his own brain, he had whispered the suggestion of this journey into Buckingham's ear, and now he knew that he had gained his first trick in this game of policy. Buckingham was at once summoned to wait on Philip, and the mystery still being kept up, the Marquis was introduced through a secret passage

into His Majesty's private apartment. Bristol went with Buckingham, and "never," he says, "saw the Spanish gravity laid aside before, nor any man more overtaken with joy than the King was, for he secretly understood of the Prince's being here."

We must smile at all this pretence of keeping a secret which was no secret. It is more than probable that the news of the Prince's journey through France had reached the Spanish Court before the arrival of the travellers themselves. There were couriers who would ride till their horses fell dead to carry such news. But the handsome Buckingham, bowing low before that young blue-eyed man with the heavy jowl—Velasquez has made his face immortal—allowed himself no more than veiled hints of the great company that had come with him. So early the next morning, before the tired travellers were out of bed, it was to the Marquis, and not to the Prince (whose presence was still officially "unknown"), that the Spanish King sent his favourite and Prime Minister, to do him honour. But now the mask was thrown aside. The Prince rose and dressed, as well as Buckingham. But before they were ready to admit Olivares—for the first time, no doubt, they arrayed themselves in that magnificence which dazzled the eyes of the Spanish Court—Philip himself came to the English Ambassador's house.*

The warmest courtesies passed between the company. Olivares threw himself before the Prince, "kneel'd and kissed his hands and hugg'd his thighs,"† and Philip, embracing Charles, was prodigal with those compliments and gracious words which flow so readily from a Spanish tongue, and sometimes mean so little.

Though it were Lent, he said, it should not be Lent to him, and his guests should have all that they wished, which his country could provide. Then, after many such words of devoted service, and still further to show his affection, Philip asked the Prince "wherein he should chiefly pleasure him the first day."

This was the Prince's opportunity to play his part of knight-errant, in which he had been well coached by Geordie Villiers, who had more imagination than Charles Stuart.

* Mr. Mead to Sir Martin Stuteville.

† Howell.

"Your Majesty will give me most joy," he said, "by letting me see my mistress, for whose sake I have undertaken so long, wearisome, and dangerous a journey."

It was well said, though the romance of these words does not ring true. We can hardly believe in the sincerity of the Royal lover at this stage of his adventures, though later he seems to have become truly enamoured, and we know that the lady whom he had come to woo was very frightened. She, poor girl, was but a pawn to be played by politicians. A pious and sweet-natured "child of Mary," to whom she loved to pray in private devotions, she would have been happiest in a convent, among singing nuns, glad at having quitted a rude and cruel world for a sanctuary of peace. Brought up in the Catholic faith, so passionately orthodox in Spain, she feared a heretic as a child fears a dream-bogey, and in the months of secret negotiation which had preceded this marriage she had wept many tears, beseeching her brother Philip that he would break off this bargaining, and, if she must marry, at least give her a husband of her own faith. Philip, a huntsman by nature, a King by accident of birth, but always a good-hearted fellow, was full of tenderness for his sister, the Princess Mary, and would have gladly yielded to her entreaties. But he had a master in Olivares, to whom he left most of his duties of kingcraft, so long as he himself might ride with his boarhounds, and not be bothered. Olivares, thought Philip, knew best, and he was not disposed to drop the negotiations with England, though he would drive a hard bargain with the Protestants, and use this marriage as a means to free the English Catholics from their fetters, to light the altars of the Faith again in England, to win that nation back to its old grace. Though it might be a sacrifice for the Princess, it would be in the cause of the Church, and it was a glorious opportunity of service to God. This, briefly, was the Spanish position in the affair at the beginning, and from their point of view a perfectly reasonable and righteous position, though insufferable to the English nation as a whole. At the first coming of the Prince, it was believed, with a curious infatuation, that he was prepared to change his faith, and it was only after the King and his ministers found out their mistake on this point that the cordiality of their reception cooled down. So the poor child Princess—she was only sixteen

—yielded outwardly to the arguments and entreaties of her brother the King and his counsellors, though she shrank with horror from her fate.

Philip then would not deny the Prince his pleasure, and arranged that on the Sunday the Princess should drive with her family on the Prado, "which," says the Earl of Bristol, in a letter to King James, "is a hole without the town where men do take air." So that the Prince of Wales should not be doubtful as to the lady he had come so far to see, she would wear a blue ribbon around her arm to distinguish her. This little drama was duly enacted with much splendour, and a comical pretence of mystery. In the great Royal coach of Spain, about as big as a modern pantechnicon, were the King, Queen, Philip's two brothers (the Infanta Don Carlos, and Cardinal Don Fernando), and the Infanta, and behind them twenty more coaches crowded with grandees and ladies, among whom were, of course, the Prime Minister Olivares and his lady.

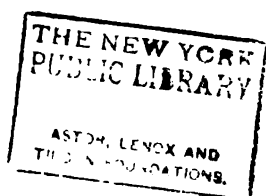
On the other side came Prince Charles "disguised"—by which we may guess that he wore a mask—attended in the same coach by Buckingham, the Earl of Bristol, the Count de Gondomar, and Sir Walter Ashton.

In a letter from Mr. Mead to Sir Martin Stuteville it is said that the carriage in which the Infanta sat drew up alongside that of the Prince of Wales, and Philip begged his sister to unmask—that is to say, to draw back the lace mantilla behind which all Spanish ladies veiled their beauty, or their ugliness, when in public places—so that he, the King, might talk to her pleasurably. The Princess did this, and Charles saw her face for the first time, as she drooped her eyes before his gaze, knowing that she was being exhibited for the marriage market. It was to all accounts a lovely face. Howell describes her as "a very comely lady, rather of a Flemish complexion than Spanish, fair-haired, and carrieth a most pure mixture of red and white in her face." Howell says also that "as soon as the Infanta saw the Prince her colour rose very high, which we hold to be an impression of love and affection, for the face is often times the true index of the heart." We may agree with Howell as to this index of the heart, but that crimson blush was more probably a sign of shame and distress at this public exhibition and this distressful meeting.



THE INFANTA MARIA

FROM THE PAINTING BY VELAZQUEZ IN THE PRADO, MADRID



In a contemporary tract * there is a somewhat different description of this event. "Both the King and the Prince made diverse turns and returns in their several coaches, and in several parts of the town and Prado (which is a place of recreation where the nobility is often wont to take the air), and every one of them saw each other in a clear light, not being able to sustain from saluting each other with the hat as they passed by, though they had agreed to take no notice of one another; and this was all they did for that time. The King and all that royal company returned by night by a world of torch light, which made a most glorious show." †

According to Mr. Mead, a rumour had now spread through all Madrid that the Prince of Wales had come, and the people thronged so closely round the Royal coaches eager to see this knight-errant and his famous companion, Buckingham, that they could hardly pass along, while the Prince, graciously wishing to satisfy their curiosity, stood up all the way to show himself to the people. After this the English visitors went privately to the Court two or three times, but still there was no introduction between the Prince and the Infanta.

In the King's Council consultations were being held with Massimi, the Papal Nuncio, as to the conditions by which the Papal Dispensation would be granted for the marriage of the Catholic Princess to the heretic Prince, who they hoped would one day change his Protestant religion for the true Faith, and Olivares and his ministers were putting their heads together as to the articles of the marriage treaty. Doubts were also beginning to creep into the brain of Olivares as to the likelihood of the Prince's conversion. He had already sounded Buckingham on the point, and had not got any satisfaction. "Let us despatch this matter out of hand," he said, "and strike it up without the Pope." "Very well," said Buckingham, cheerfully; "but how is it to be done?" "The means," replied Olivares, "are very easy. It is but the conversion of the Prince, which we cannot conceive but his Highness intended upon his resolution for this journey." Buckingham protested bluntly against

* Attributed to the Earl of Bristol.

† "A true relation and journal of the manner of the arrival and magnificent entertainment given to the high and mighty Prince Charles, Prince of Great Britain, by the King of Spain, in his Court at Madrid." London, 1623.

any such idea. "Then," said Olivares, "we must send to Rome."

Until those things were settled it was not their intention to admit any close intimacy between the lovers, though Philip, more impetuous than his counsellors, had vowed that the Prince after his gallant journey deserved to have the Infanta put into his arms at once. But though the Infanta was to be jealously guarded until the "business" was settled, in everything else the Prince was to be honoured and flattered. King Philip insisted on Charles taking precedence of himself. A suite of rooms was put at his service, with a hundred men to wait on him, and Philip gave him a golden key which would admit him at any time to the Royal bed-chamber. Then a day was appointed for a state entry into Madrid, the Prince and Buckingham, and their suite, being lodged one night at St. Jerome's monastery, whence, on the coronation days, the Spanish kings were by long tradition accustomed to make their entry into the capital. This monastery was half a mile out of the city, or, as Francis Cottington said, with slight inaccuracy, in a letter to his wife, "as farre distant as from Whitechappele to Westminster." The Prince of Wales was attended by the King himself, by Olivares, the Prime Minister, Gondomar, all the Ministers of State, and a swarm of Spanish grandees. The ceremony was one of the most magnificent ever seen in Old Madrid. When by Royal command all the houses were draped in tapestry, and the roads cleared of coaches, the Prince, at the right hand of the King, rode under a canopy, a gallant and noble figure as he sat his horse. Buckingham, with the Count of Olivares, followed next, and then Digby, Earl of Bristol, and one of the grandees. They were preceded by all the councillors, who kissed the Prince's hand, saying they were commanded to do no favour nor bestow any office without his direction during his stay in Spain. Then came the grandees and don señors of Spain, in a glittering and golden pageant. The sumptuary laws had been repealed, and "the great ones and courtiers being most richly attired and their horses most sumptuously caparisoned." So they rode through the picturesque town, received with the acclamations of the Spanish people in their holiday dress, a wonderful picture of gorgeous colour under the blue sky.

Upon arriving at the Palace the Prince and Buckingham

were taken to the Queen, who was very gracious, and then conducted to their apartments. Here Charles was presented with many rich gifts. The King gave him a great golden ewer set with precious stones, and the Queen sent him a rich night-gown, with a cabinet of jewels, gloves, and sweet perfumes. The Princess Mary also gave a present, though her heart did not go with it, to her knight-errant. This was a costly suite of hangings.*

So determined was the Spanish Court to live up to its traditions of chivalry towards Royal guests, that the Council sat up fifteen hours, from noon till three the next morning, devising new means of honouring the Prince, and by their advice the King made an act of Royal clemency, throwing open the prisons, paying their fines, and giving life to twenty who were condemned to death. For servers, and cup-bearers and carvers the Prince had none but marquises and earls. And the people of Madrid were not behindhand in demonstrating their interest in the visit; bonfires and fireworks were kept blazing for eight days or more. "I never saw people so joyed in all my days," says Cottington. Guitars twanged in the streets of Old Madrid, and there was much singing under casement windows. Poets, inspired by the romance of the adventure (knowing nothing of all the squalid bargaining and intriguing that was going on behind the scenes), composed sonnets and ballads, which were recited and sung by a people that loved such minstrelsy. Lopez de Vega, the greatest of these poets, was not silent, and everywhere, in taverns and on balconies, were heard his words—

"Carlos Estuardo soy
Que, scindo Amor mi quia
El cielo d'España voy
Per ver mi estrella Maria."†

In their private apartments Charles and Buckingham sat down late at night, or in the intervals of feasting and pageantry, to write joint letters to their old Dad and Gossip at home, who

* Letter from Francis Cottington to his lady.

† Which has been roughly translated—

"Charles Stuart I am,
Love has guided me far
To the heaven of Spain,
To Maria my star."

was eating his heart out for news of them. James himself wrote often to them both, letters in which his genuine affection for them is revealed by an anxiety that they should make a brave show at the Spanish Court, and by many tender and homely messages. One of these letters is worth quoting fully, as it is so rich in characteristic touches. It may be left in its original spelling, which reveals the broad Scots speech of the Royal pedant:—

"My sweete boyes, I hoape before this tyme ye are fullie satisfyed with my diligent caire in wrytting unto you upon all occasions; but I have better cause to querrell you, that ye should ever have bene in doubte of my often writting unto you, especiallie as long as ye saw no poste nor creature was comd from me but Michell Androw; & yett by Carlele, in quhose cumpanie he pairted from me, I wrotte my first Lettre unto you. And I wonder also quhy ye showlde aske me the qucestion if ye showlde sende me any more jointe letres or not; alace [alas] sweete hairtis, it is all my conforte in youre absence, that ye wrytte jointlie unto me, besydes the great ease it is, both to me and you; and ye neede not doubte but I will be wairie enough in not acquainting my Counsell with any secrete in your Letres. But I hawe bene trowbled with Hamilton,* quho being present by chawnce at my ressavng both of youre first and seconde paquette out of Madrid, wold needs peere over my showlder quhen I was reading thaime, ofring ever to helpe me to reade any harde wordis, and, in good faith, he is in this bussienesse, as in all things else, as variable and uncertaine as the Moone. But the newis of youre gloriouse reception thaire, makes me afrayed that ye will both miskenne your olde Dade hereafter; but in earniste my babie ye must be as spairng as ye can in youre spending thaire, for youre officers are allreaddie putte to the height of thaire speede with provyding the fyve thowsande powndis by exchainge, and now youre tilting stuffe quhiche thaye knowe not how to provyde will come to three more:† and God knowis how my coffers are allreaddie drained. . . . But I praye you, my babie, take heade of being hurte if ye runne at tilte. As for Steenie, I hoape thow wilt come bakke

* The Marquis of Hamilton.

† Buckingham afterwards cancelled the order for the tilting equipment.

before that tyme, for I hoape my babie will be readdie to come away before the horses can be thaire wel restid, and all things readdie for running at tilte, quhiche muste be my babies pairting blow if he can have laaser [leisure] to parforme it thaire. I praye you in the meanetyme keepe your selfis in use of dawncing privatlie thogh ye showlde quhissel [whistle] and sing one to another like Jakke and Tom for faulte of bettir musike. As for the maine bussienesse, I hoape the Dispensation will come speedilie and well, if other wayes ye must putte that King bravelie to it, as I wrotte in my last unto you, for the Archduchessis ambassadoure heere sayes that my sonnys going thaire in this fashion hath obleished that King in honoure to bestowe his sister upon him, quhether the Dispensation come or not ; & that thaire are nombers of Catholike Romanes and protestants married in the worlde without the Popes dispensation. This the Baron de Boisshot * saide to my selfe. I sende you according to youre desyre a lettre of thanks to that King, quhiche, my sweete Steenie thou shall deliver unto him in my name with all the best complements thou can, and quhane thou wants, Carlele can best instruct thee in that airte. And I have sent a Letre for the Conde d'Olivares in the last paquette. And thus God keepe you my sweete Boyes with my fatherlie blessing ; and send you a happie successfull journey, & a joyefull & happie returne in the armes of youre deare Dade. From Theobaldis the first of Apryle.

"JAMES R "

There are some droll passages in that letter which stick in one's imagination, specially the picture of the Marquis of Hamilton poking his nose over the King's shoulder to read His Majesty's most private letters, and the quaint advice of James to his two boys anent the practice of dancing. It would be difficult, however, to imagine the stately Charles and the magnificent Buckingham whistling jigs and kicking up their heels in private, like "Jack and Tom."

James was unstinting in his prodigal generosity to the two young gentlemen abroad, so that they might outshine all the splendour of the Spanish Court. In a letter to Charles, dated 17th March, 1623, he writes—

"I send you the robes of the Order [of the Garter] which

* An ambassador from Spain, whose coach the travellers had seen near Rochester.

you must not forget to wear upon St. George's Day, and dine together in them, which I hope in heaven you may ; for it will be a goodly sight for the Spaniards to see my two boys dine in them. I send you also the jewels I promised, with some of mine, and such of yours, I mean *both* of you, as are worth the sending, for my Baby's presenting to his mistress."

But in spite of this generosity, it was not enough to satisfy the illimitable desires of Buckingham's magnificence. This was the greatest opportunity George Villiers had yet had in his life for the display of his handsome person, and for dazzling the eyes of the world by the glittering splendour of his dress. He was determined to make the most of it, and to outshine every sumptuous grandee about him. His dresses blazed with diamonds, and he had purposely had them sewn on so loosely that some of them would fall on to the polished floors of the palace when he moved about. When any courtier bent to pick one up, he smilingly refused to take the glistening toy. No wonder, with such pranks of pride, that Buckingham needed more and more jewels to be sent from England. With a boldness which is amazing to modern readers, he wrote to the King, demanding fresh supplies, as though he had a right to every jewel in the Court. He also egged on Charles to make similar requests, and from the two following letters we may see how these two young cockerels would bleed the parent bird.

The first is in Prince Charles's handwriting, with a post-script from Buckingham.

"SIR,

"I confess that ye have sent mor jewels then (at my departure) I thought to had use of ; but, since my cumming, seeing manie jewels worne heere, & that my braverie can consist of nothing else, besides that sume of them which ye have appointed me to give to the Infanta, in Steenie's opinion and myne, ar' nott fitt to be given to her ; therfor I have taken this bouldness to entreate your Majesty to send more for my owen wearing & for giving to my Mistres : in which I thinke Your Majesty shall not doe amiss to take Carlile's advyce. So humblie craving your blessing I rest.

"Your Majesty's humble & obedient servant,

"CHARLES"

Then comes Buckingham's impudence :—

"I your Doge sayes your sone, have manie jewels, neyther fitt for your own, your sones, nor your daughters wering, but verie fitt to bestow of those here who must necessarillie have presents ; & this way will be least chargable to your Majesty in my poure opinion.

"MADRILL the 22 of Aprill, 1623"

Buckingham followed up this appeal for more gew-gaws by a letter addressed to his "dere Dad, Gossope, and Steward," in which he gave his "poor and candid opinion what will be fittest more to send." He reproaches James for having been so sparing in his despatch of trinkets, and protests that he, George Villiers, has been compelled to lend some of his own jewels to the Prince that he may make a brave show, though still not brave enough.

"Sir, he hath neyther chaine nor hat band ; and I beseech you consider first how rich they are in jewells here, then in what a poure equipage he came in, how he hath no other meanes to appere like a Kings sonne, how they are usefullests at such a time as this when they may doe your selfe, your sone, & the nation honor, and lastlie how it will neither caust nor hasard you anie thinge. These resons, I hope, since you have ventured allredie your cheefest jewell your Sonne, will serve to perswade you to lett louse thesse more after him : first your best hattband ; the Portingall diamond ; the rest of the pendant diamonds, to make up a Necles to give his Mistris ; & the best rope of perle ; with a rich chaine or bow for himself to waire, or els your Doge must want a coller ; which is the redie way to put him into it. There are manie other jewells which are of so mean qualitie as they deserve not that name, but will save much in your purs & serve verie well for Presents. They had never so good and greate an occasion to take the aire out of there boxes as at this time. God knowes when they shall have such another ; & they had neede some times to get nerer the Sonne to continue them in there perfection. Here give me leave humbly on my knees to give your Majesty thanks for that rich jewell you sent me in a box by my lord Vahan, and give him

leave to kiss your hands from me who tooke the paines to draw it. My reward to him is this, he spent his time well, which is the thinge we should all most desier, and is the glorie I covett most here in your service, which sweet Jesus grant me, & your blessing.

“Your Majesty’s most humble slave and doge.

“STRENIE

“MADRILL the 25 of April 1623”

That the old dad and gossip might be kept in good temper and would part more easily with his jewels, Buckingham sent him a present, which he “impudently begged,” of four Spanish asses, which were being shipped over to England with a Barbary horse from Walter Ashton, and some camels from the Earl of Bristol. This would please the King mightily, for he loved to stock his parks with rare animals. Buckingham also promised to lie in wait for all the rare “colour birds” that could be heard of. “But,” he adds, with a saucy threat, “if you do not send your baby jewels enough, I’ll stop all other presents. Therefore look to it.”

King James was not offended by this greediness, and made haste to satisfy the vanity of his son and favourite. In a letter to them both he writes :—

“For my Baby’s presenting his mistress, I send him an old double cross of Lorrain, not so rich as ancient, and yet not contemptible for the value ;—a good looking-glass with my picture in it, to be hung at her girdle, which ye must tell her ye have caused so to be enchanted by art magic, as whenever she shall be pleased to look in it, she shall see the fairest lady that her brother or your father’s dominions can afford ; ye shall present her with two pair of long diamonds set like an anchor, and a fair pendant diamond hanging at them ; ye shall give her a goodly rope of pearls ; ye shall give her a carcanet on collar ; thirteen great ball rubies, and thirteen knots or conques of pearls ; and ye shall give her three-goodly peak pendants diamonds, whereof the biggest to be worn at a needle on the midst of her forehead, and one in every ear. As for thee, my sweet gossip, I send thee a fair table diamond, which I would once have given thee before, if thou would have taken it for

wearing in thy hat, or where thou pleasest; and if my Baby will spare thee the two long diamonds in form of an anchor, with the pendant diamond, it were fit for an admiral to wear, and he hath enough better jewels for his mistress though he has of thine own, thy good old jewel, thy twin Pindars diamonds, thy picture case I gave Kate, and the great diamond chain I gave her, who would have sent thee the last pin she had, if I had not staid her."

Mr. Mead, to his good friend Stuteville, estimated the value of all these jewels sent from England into Spain at £600,000. A great number of them passed as presents into the hands of Spanish lords and ladies, and temporarily into the care of the Spanish treasury. "The Prince," says Arthur Wilson, "presented his mistress with a necklace which all Spain could not parallel—pearls that had not been long plucked from their watery bed, and had left them but few fellows." The Lady Mary, however, declined to accept these gifts until all things were settled for her marriage, and they were guarded by the Ministers of State, who, to their great honour, returned them afterwards to the Prince, when the match was broken off.

But all this profusion of jewels and this outward gaiety were but mockery. Before many days had passed in Madrid it was borne home to Buckingham and the Prince that they had made a fatal error in coming to Spain.

In their letters to the King, generally written by Buckingham and signed jointly, they kept from him the dangers and difficulties of their false position, and buoyed him up, and themselves also, with vain hopes. Olivares had followed up his conversation with Buckingham as to his and the Prince's conversion by getting the Duke to attend a formal discourse as to the truth of the Catholic Church. This took place on April 4th, at the monastery of San Geronimo, where a Carmelite Friar, named Francisco de Jesus, argued solemnly for four hours on the Catholic dogma. Buckingham, sitting there twisting his jewelled hat, and with a polite smile on his handsome face, listened with admirable patience, but, to the surprise no doubt of the friar, remained quite unmoved by all this eloquence.

On the evening of St. George's Day, when James in England imagined his two boys being "a goodly sight," Charles himself

was invited to a religious conference, and this time four learned and eloquent friars were in attendance. The Prince was stiff and silent, but when Antonio de Sotomayor advanced proofs as to the Pope's claim to be Vicar of Christ, he challenged the interpretation given to certain passages of the Scriptures. He asked that they should be repeated in French, and then turned and said a few words in English to Buckingham.

By this time the Favourite's stock of patience was exhausted, and, losing all control of his temper, Steenie jumped from his chair, and showing his contempt for the friars by unseemly gestures, threw his hat on the ground and stamped on it. For a lord marquis it was a little lacking in dignity!

This brought the conference to an abrupt end, and rudely awakened Philip IV. and his ministers from their dream as to the conversion of the Prince.

The people of Madrid, too, had lost their first enthusiasm, and some of them began to murmur against the "heretics." "The Duke of Buckingham," writes Howell, "hath been indisposed a good while and lies sick at Court, where the Prince hath no public exercise of devotion, but only bedchamber prayers; and some think that his lodging in the King's House is likely to prove a disadvantage to the main business: for whereas some sorts of a people here hardly hold us to be Christians, if the Prince had a Palace of his own, and been permitted to have used a room for an open chapel to exercise the liturgy of the Church of England, it would have brought them to a better opinion of us; and to this end there were some of our best church plate and vestments brought hither, but never used."

That the Prince and Buckingham did not make an open profession of their Protestantism was contrary to the King's wishes and advice, for soon after their arrival he sent them a letter on this subject.

"MY SWEETE BOYES" (he wrote),

"The Spanishe ambassadowre let a word fall to Grislie, as if thaire wolde be some quæstion made that my babie's chaplains showlde not doe their service in ye King's palace thaire; but he concludit, y^t that busiennesse wolde be soone accommodated, allwayes in cace such difficultie showlde

be stukken at, ye may remember thaim, y^t it is an ill præparation for giving ye Infante free exercise of her religion heere, to refuse it to my soane thaire; since thaire religion is as odious to a number heere as ours is thaire. And if thaye will not yeelde, then my sweete babie, shoue youre self not to be ashamed of youre profession; but goe sometymes to my Ambassadour's house and have your service thaire, y^t God & man may see ye are not ashamed of youre religion."

From that time both Philip and Olivares would have been glad to break off the proposed match; but with the Prince in Madrid it was impossible to do so openly, without the risk of incurring war with England, which, with the Armada in their memory, was a horrid thought.

Olivares relied on diplomacy, of which he believed himself a master. The Marquiss of Iniosa was sent to England, as an ambassador extraordinary, to thank James for sending his son to Madrid, but with secret instructions to get James to make further concessions to English Catholics; and a messenger was despatched to Rome to explain the situation in Madrid to the Pope, and to delay the dispensation.

But the Pope had also been indulging in the dream of recovering England for the Church through the conversion of its Prince. To Buckingham he had written an earnest and persuasive letter, exhorting him not only to become a Roman Catholic himself, but to use his great influence to convert the Court and Kingdom of England. To Charles he had written a similar letter, and spoke of the marriage "having elevated him to the hope of an extraordinary advantage." Then, to the annoyance of Olivares, he sent his Papal Dispensation to the Court of Madrid, and it arrived a few days before the conference on religion which had ended so disastrously.

To Charles, and to the Spanish courtiers who were not behind the scenes, the arrival of the Dispensation seemed to be all that was necessary to complete the match, and Madrid was thrown into a joyful excitement. But it soon became apparent that this was only the beginning of a great controversy. The Dispensation would be null and void unless the Prince swore to observe the conditions laid down by Rome, and those conditions were even harder than the articles previously discussed with the

Spanish ministers. Every stringent agreement by which the Princess should be safeguarded in her faith was elaborately set forth. It was demanded that the children of the marriage should be educated in the Catholic faith, and surrounded by Catholic nurses and teachers until they reached twelve years of age; that they should not be disqualified from succession to the Crown of England because of their faith; that the Infanta should take with her as many Catholic priests and servants as she desired, and that both she and they should have absolute liberty in the public exercise of their religion. These articles, especially those relating to the upbringing of the children, were difficult of acceptance by the Prince of a nation to whom such a treaty, if published, would give the greatest offence, and both Charles and Buckingham expressed their indignation that the conditions of the marriage should have been altered and made more stringent since the private agreement with Gondomar in England.

Buckingham had a furious encounter with Olivares, and for two days afterwards the Favourites refused to speak to one another. By this time Buckingham would have gladly washed his hands of the whole business and set sail for home, but Charles was willing to yield every possible point that could in safety and honour be conceded rather than go home without his bride. He dreaded the ridicule of such a return with that horror of proud and sensitive youth. So he parleyed and made concessions and vain promises, which, as a constitutional prince, would certainly have never been fulfilled.

In all these negotiations with the Spanish counsellors very little was said about one part of the bargain, which had been the greatest inducement to James to favour the Spanish marriage—the restitution of the Palatinate. It had been tacitly ignored by Olivares, and in their great desire to smooth over difficulties, both the Prince and Buckingham had not pressed the question forward. When, after his return to England with the sense of failure rankling in his heart, the Prince was as eager to break off the marriage as he had previously been eager to arrange it, this omission was charged against the Spaniards as a violation of their agreement, and demanded as the main clause of the contract. But it must be admitted that while in Madrid the Prince and Buckingham were more to blame



OLIVARES, PRIME MINISTER OF SPAIN
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than the Spaniards for leaving the question of the Palatinate unsettled.

But to the full demand of the Pope Charles would not agree. So there was further delay and further displays of temper from Buckingham.

It must be admitted that our "hero" Buckingham (he had few of the conventional virtues of heroism!) was the centre of these personal discords. Always cheerfully arrogant, and accustomed, as Favourite, to playing the leading part in any drama illuminated by his magnificence, he was extremely mortified to see that the Spanish ministers were inclined to ignore him, and paid higher respect to Digby, Earl of Bristol. According to Bishop Hacket and others, the Count Olivares especially was most marked in his disregard of Buckingham's diplomatic position, and in the great honour he paid to Bristol. This found out the weak spot in Buckingham's shining armour of conceit. He behaved, it seems, as petulantly as a foolish boy, and made a great scene one day because Bristol went ahead in the King's coach with the Prince, while he was left to travel behind with people of less importance. He sulked outrageously, and protested against what he considered as a slight deliberately put upon him, until his wounded vanity was assuaged a little by overtaking the Royal party, and taking his usual place at their side. Bristol, astonished at this show of temper, behaved courteously, and like a gentleman, and indeed it must be granted to him that throughout this visit of his Prince to Spain he seems to have been consistently affable and courteous, though he had ample reason to dislike the presence of the Favourite.

Meanwhile the papal Nuncio Massimi declared that the Pope's declared will must be fulfilled to the letter before the Dispensation could take effect. Thus there was a deadlock.

Buckingham, quite desperate, but believing as usual in the magnetism of his personality, endeavoured to use his persuasiveness on this inflexible Italian. Dramatic always in his temperament, he sought an interview with the Nuncio in the dead of night, and argued with him hotly for three hours, using every form of entreaty and threat. "There is no way," he said at last, "to treat for this marriage, but with the sword drawn over the Catholics." But the Italian was politely obdurate, and Buckingham's energy spent itself in vain.

Charles now made more promises to grant religious toleration to the Catholics in England, and these were submitted to a Junta of Theologians. They, after many solemn deliberations, decided that the marriage might take place provided that the Infanta remained in Spain for a year after the ceremony had been performed, within which time the penal laws must be repealed in England, and the free exercise of their religion in their private houses should be publicly proclaimed to English Catholics, the King, the Prince, and the Privy Council swearing that these privileges should never be withdrawn, and obtaining the assent of Parliament to these undertakings.

When this decision was announced, Buckingham was again furious, and more candid than his Prince, not having the same inducements of love to keep him silent, burst out into violent reproaches. The whole business, he said, was full of trickery and deceit. Olivares turned to him scornfully, and said: "It would have been better if you had never meddled with it, but had left it in Bristol's hands."

During all this time in England poor James had hoped against hope that all was going well. The letters he received from his two "sweet boys" had hinted at trouble, but had always ended with hope. So sure was he that they would soon return, that Denmark House and St. James's were being sumptuously decorated by Inigo Jones for the Infanta's reception, and a fleet was being furnished, which would shortly set sail under the Earl of Rutland, Buckingham's father-in-law, to bring back the bride and bridegroom.

To show his gratitude to Buckingham for having, as he thought, safely brought this adventure to a happy issue, he sent him out the highest honour which might be granted to an English subject, and the Lord Marquis became in May of this year 1623 His Grace the Duke of Buckingham. When, alone in his room, he sat looking upon the paper which gave him this supreme honour, the magnificent Englishman, all blazing in his jewels, must have thought for at least a few moments of that George Villiers, who but seven years ago, dressed in a rusty black suit, "had hung at the heels of the Court seeking a place."

But James himself was secretly anxious and troubled, and he received a strange letter from his son, which must have shown him that all was not well at Madrid.

"Sir," wrote Charles, "I do find that if I have not somewhat under your Majesty's hand to show whereby that ye engage yourself to do whatsoever I shall promise in your name, that it will retard the business a great while; wherefore I humbly beseech your Majesty to send me a warrant to this effect:— 'We do here promise by the word of a King that whatsoever you our son shall promise in our name, we shall punctually perform.' Sir, I confess this is an ample trust that I desire, and if it were not mere necessity I should not be so bold."

The extraordinary weakness of James when his affections were appealed to may be realized by his immediate reply to this outrageous request.

"It were a strange trust," he wrote, "that I should refuse to put upon my only son and upon my best servant. I know such two as ye are will never promise in my name but what may stand with my conscience, honour, and safety, and all these I do fully trust to any one of you two."

Then four weeks passed without the King receiving a single line from Madrid. He went about dazed and sorrowful, so that all in the Court and the very people feared a great tragedy or dishonour to the nation. Then on the evening of June 14 Francis Cottington arrived at Greenwich, having travelled at all speed from the Spanish Court. He brought with him letters from the Prince and his companion, in which for the first time James learnt the full truth of the Spanish demands, the concessions offered by the Prince, and what to the King was the worst blow of all, the possibility that his son would be kept in Madrid for a whole year more, not as the husband of the Infanta, but as the prisoner of Spain, until James himself had fulfilled all that was promised, and gained over the Parliament to assent to the independence of the Catholic faith in England. The poor old man, poring over these letters, was plunged deep in despair and terror. That night he wrote a letter expressing all his grief.

"My sweet boys, your letter by Cottington hath stricken me dead. I fear it shall very much shorten my days; and I am the more perplexed that I know not how to satisfy the people's expectation here; neither know I what to say to our Council for the fleet that stayed upon a wind this fortnight. Rutland

and all aboard must now be stayed, and I know not what reason I shall pretend for the doing of it. But as for my advice and directions that ye crave, in case they will not alter their decree, it is in a word to come speedily away if ye can get leave, and give over all treaty. And this I speak without respect of any security they can offer you, except ye never look to see your old dad again, whom I fear ye shall never see, if ye see him not this winter. Alas! I now repent me sore that ever I suffered you to go away. I care for match, nor nothing, so I may once have you in my arms again. God grant it! God grant it! God grant it! Amen! amen! amen! I protest ye shall be as heartily welcome as if ye had done all things ye went for, so that I may once have you in my arms again, and God bless you both, my only sweet son, and my only best sweet servant; and let me hear from you quickly with all speed, as ye love my life, and so God speed you a happy and joyful meeting in the arms of your dear dad."

During all this fretful business Charles had had to restrain the ardour of his young blood. He was only allowed to speak with the Princess in the presence of a witness, with Lord Bristol as interpreter, and the King, "who," says Howell, "always sat hard by to overhear all." Archie, the King's fool, who had come over with the train of English courtiers, was much more familiar with the Princess than her Royal lover. "Our cousin Archie," says Howell again, "hath more privilege than any, for he often goes with his fool's coat when the Infanta is with her duennas and Ladies of Honour, and keeps a-blowing and blustering among them, blurting out what he lists." Charles may well have envied his own fool.

No doubt all this carefulness to prevent any rash dalliance of love, which might afterwards come to nothing, piqued the Prince into believing that he had a sincere passion for the Princess, and being young, of poetic temperament, and influenced by the romance of his mission, and by the very atmosphere of Madrid, where Cupid-sighs are in every breeze, it is not wildly improbable that he did really have at this time an amorous imagination in which the Spanish girl, with her pink-and-white face, appeared as the lady of his heart's desire. Howell says that he had seen him, pensive, with those dark grave eyes of his fixed steadily upon the Princess for half an hour at a time, and that driving

out in a coach he would make it stay at the corner of some street for a whole hour, while he waited and watched for this Donna to come by. Olivares declared publicly that Charles watched the Infanta as a cat does a mouse.

Perhaps all this was nothing but a pose, carefully thought out by Buckingham, who delighted in such stage-management. But certainly Charles and his companion played the game well, and in spite of all vexations and bitter disappointment, kept up this character of knight-errantry in a really heroic style. Not Pyramus, nor Palamon, nor Amadis de Gaul, nor any other lover of chivalrous romance, did a more gay adventure in love than when the Prince of Wales set out one morning with his companion to the garden of the Casa de Campo, where, when the dew was still in the flower-cups, the Donna Infanta wandered along the bank of a little stream, "in maiden meditation fancy free." Charles Stuart, that young man like Arthur's dearest knight, in his grave beauty, stepped on tip-toe across the greensward of that garden outside the city, followed by his one companion, his eyes lustrous with the emotion of this love-sport, and roving in search of the fair Princess. Presently he could hear her voice, but, alas! she was in the orchard beyond the garden, and a wall divided them. But love is not to be balked by bricks. Charles Stuart, given a leg-up by his comrade, mounted the wall, though it was very high, and, poised a moment, like Mercury new lighted on a heaven-kissing hill, sprang to earth. But his reception by her whom he called his mistress was extremely disconcerting. Instead of greeting him with a gracious hand, and eyes on fire with affection, the Infanta no sooner saw him than she gave a loud scream, and fled in alarm to her attendants. We can imagine the figure of Charles, gallant in his cavalier dress, with its drooping feather and jewelled hat-band, but stiff and embarrassed at this predicament, the colour of mingled shame and anger staining his pale face. An old Marquis, the Infanta's guardian, approached, and falling on his knees, begged the Prince to retire, adding that he, the Princess's servant, would be likely to lose his head should he suffer His Highness to remain. Charles must have cursed Buckingham and his own romantic temperament that had urged him to this folly. Above everything in the world the Stuart hated to be ridiculous, and now he was made a fool of by this

mistress, who screamed at his approach. Fortunately he was spared the ignominy of climbing up the wall without a friendly hand as a stirrup for his foot, and, the orchard door being unlocked, he left that fair garden and his reluctant lady-love. If Buckingham were on the other side of the wall, we can imagine the gay dog laughing till his sides ached at the Prince's discomfiture and long visage.

George was not so popular in Spain as his magnificence and gallantry deserved. The ladies certainly were dazzled by his splendid figure, and by the generous way in which he dispersed the jewels begged from his old dad and gossip. But the Spaniards of the Court were accustomed to stiff and stately etiquette in the presence of the Blood Royal, and were shocked to their very marrow by the flippant familiarity of this favourite in the company of his Prince. It seemed to them something gross and insolent that this marquis should show so little reverence to his master. "He was sometimes covered," says Bishop Hacket, "when the Prince was bare; sometimes sitting when the Prince stood; capering aloft in sudden fits; and chirping the ends of sonnets." This was bad enough, but what envenomed such grave men as Olivares against the light-hearted companion of the Prince was the suspicion that he poked fun at *them*. "The Duke of Buckingham," says the Bishop, in his *Life of the Lord Keeper Williams*, "it must be owned, was very rash and too precipitous in Spain, delighting to give matters of the highest concern unaccountable turns according to his own fancy, which method was very disagreeable according to the formalities of the Spanish nation. They had been told that he used to make jests upon them, and deride them for their gravity and state. This made them see everything he did in the worst light." Nothing could be more horrible to a Spanish grandee than to be the subject of ridicule. Yet to us, though for political reasons such behaviour was most dangerous, there is something rather charming in this picture of Steenie, utterly careless of all the pomposities of the Spanish Court, "chirping the ends of sonnets," careless whether he had his hat on or off, or whether he stood or sat, but always cheerfully at ease, and satisfied with his own shining splendour. Although George Villiers was essentially an adventurer, and a professional favourite, he did not pander to princes, but rather regarded himself as raised

above them in grace of manhood. That is his redeeming quality to those who scorn a mere flatterer.

Neither the Prince nor Buckingham, however, was having so gay a time as had been expected. Of all those travellers who had ridden across France on the tracks of the Prince, not all actually arrived in Madrid. For it was broadly hinted to the visitors that so great a retinue of Englishmen would not be welcomed by the Spanish Court. The truth is that not a reign had passed since Drake had "singed the King of Spain's beard," and the English seamen had destroyed the great argosies of the Spanish main. These things could not be wholly forgotten, and although in the first flush of the Prince's coming the people of Madrid and the Spanish Court had been captivated by the romance of it, now in cooler blood the old racial and religious antagonism began to creep out. So Charles sent a rider post haste to Santander to turn back the greater part of his personal retinue. Only a few found their way to Madrid. Even these were received with cold shoulders. The Prince's apartments were not large enough to accommodate his attendants, and the Spanish Chamberlain decided that they should sleep at the other end of the town, a hopelessly inconvenient arrangement. With all their time on their hands, they wandered about the streets of Madrid, or played cards until they cursed them and this enforced idleness. The Prince their master, seeing how useless they were, yielded to their grumbling at last, and told them to pack home. One of them, James Eliot by name, took his farewell with a quaint speech, which was afterwards told as a good story in England.

"This is a dangerous place," he said, "to alter a man and turn him. I myself in a short time have perceived my own weakness and am almost turned."

"How turned?" said Charles.

"In religion," replied Eliot.

"What motive had you to turn?" asked the Prince.

"Marry," said Eliot, with a grin, "when I was in England I turned the whole Bible over to find Purgatory, and because I could not find it there I believed there was none. But now I have come to Spain I find it here, and that your Highness is in it; whence that you may be released, all your Highness's servants, who are going to Paradise, will offer unto God our utmost devotions."

To Charles there was a bitter jest in the speech that could not have been palatable.

His Grace the Duke of Buckingham would have rejoiced to go with Eliot to the Paradise that held his Kate, but by his loyalty to the Prince he was bound to stay until the marriage was made or marred. He turned to private amusements to cheer his spirits, which had been so miserably damped, and to cool his hot temper, which now blazed out too easily against Olivares and the tricky Spaniards.

According to his enemies, and even in the Chronicle of Bishop Goodman, who "did most dearly love him," he is accused of endangering the private honour of his hosts, by paying too much attention to their ladies. It is difficult to get at the truth of this, and we would like to disprove such charges. The worst of them is certainly a lie. Peyton, Wilson, Weldon, and others declare, with many disgusting details, that Villiers became inflamed with passion for the Countess of Olivares, and that when she, not favouring such villainy, confided the news of it to her husband, Philip's favourite, these two plotted to mutilate the rash lover, as a horrible vengeance.

Lord Clarendon has given the weight of his authority to discredit this scandal against Buckingham. "Though the Duke," he says, "was naturally carried violently to those passions where there was any grace or beauty in the object, yet the Duchess of Olivares was then a woman so old, past children, of so abject a presence, in a word so crooked and deformed, that she could neither tempt his appetite nor magnify his revenge."

But it is impossible to clear Buckingham entirely from all the scandals that are hinted against him, though for the sake of Kate, who waited for him at York House (she had left New Hall to come to Town), and had faith in his constancy, it would be good to do so.

"For the good duke," says Bishop Goodman, with a quaint candour of speech, "I cannot deny but that he did a little offend in his wantonness. For the Spanish ladies having their bodies scorched up with the sun, they have not *corpus succi plenum*, as the comedian saith; whereby they are not so much inclined to that vice as others are; and therefore therein Buckingham did mistake in his choice: besides the strictness of their confession

and religion which so much extols chastity. This I will say in my own knowledge of Buckingham, though I was never his ghostly father, no man could be more sorrowful and penitent for offending in that kind than Buckingham was. And seeing that the Knight taxeth almost every man for that offence, as I do not excuse Buckingham for the crime so I commend him for his penitency. He that sinned with David became a true penitent with David. Yet I confess that in that regard Buckingham was not so gracious with the Spanish nation."

At home Kate pined for his return, and as the weary months dragged on when the negotiations for the marriage were still being haggled, she sickened at his long absence, cheered only by affectionate old James, who was very kind to his Favourite's wife, by little Mary, or "Mall," her daughter, and by the great love for that "noble lord" in whose constancy she believed.

"My dear Lord," she writes, "I humbly thank you that you were pleased to write so many letters to me, which was so great a comfort to me as you cannot imagine ; for I protest to God I have had a grievous time of this our grievous absence, for I am sure it has been so to me, and my heart has felt enough, more than I hope it shall ever do again ; and I pray God release me quickly out of it by your speedy coming hither again to her that does as dearly love you as ever woman did man ; and if everybody did love you but a quarter so well you were the happiest man that was ever born, but that is impossible. But I protest I think you are the best beloved that ever favourite was, for all that have true worth in them cannot but love your sweet disposition ; if I were not so near you as I thank Christ I am, I could say no less if I said truth, for I think there was never such a man born as you are ; and how much am I bound to God that I must be that happy woman to enjoy you from all other women, and the unworthiest of all to have so great a blessing. Only this I can say for myself, you could never a' had one that could love you better than your poor true loving Kate doth,—poor now in your absence, but else the happiest and richest woman in the world. I thank you for your long letter ; I think I must give Sir Francis Cottington thanks for it too, because you say he bade you write long letters. I am beholden to him for it, because I am sure he knew they could never be too long for me, for it is all the

comfort I have now to read often over your letters. My reason I desired you not to do it, was for fear of troubling you too much ; but since you think it none, I am much bound to you for it, and I beseech you to continue it. I hope to see you by this. I have not omitted writing by any that went, for this is the sixteenth letter, and the least I have written to you since you went, whereof two of them I sent by common posts ; and I hope they will all come safely to your hands. I thank you for sending me good news of our young mistress ; I am very glad she is so delicate a creature, and of so sweet a disposition ; indeed my Lady Bristol sent me word she was a very fine lady and as good as fine. I am very glad of it, and that the Prince likes her so well, for the King says he is wonderfully taken with her. It is a wonderful good hearing, for it were a great pity but the Prince should have one he can love, because I think he will make a very honest husband, which is the greatest comfort in this world to have man and wife love truly. . . . I can send you no certain word yet of my being with child, but I am not out of hope, but we must refer all to God : as soon as I am quick I will send you word if I be with child. I thank God Moll is very well with her weaning. Thus with my daily prayers for our happy meeting, I take my leave.

“Your loving and obedient wife,

“K. BUCKINGHAM

“I pray send me word when you come”

The weaning of the little Lady Mary mentioned by the Duchess was an affair in which the King took a great interest, as he did in all matters concerning his “poor fool Kate,” as he affectionately called her. In a letter from the Duchess to His Majesty, after thanking him for two boxes of dried plums and grapes, and a box of “mollatt cakes” and chickens, she says :

“I hope my Lord Anan has told your Ma^{ty} that I did mean to wean Mall very shortly. I would not by any means adone it, till I had first made your Ma^{ty} acquainted with it, and by reason my cousin Bret's boy has been ill of late, for fear she should greeve and spyle her mylke, maks me very desiorous to wean her, and I think she is old enough, and I hope will endure her weaning very well, for I think there was never child cared less for the breast then she does, so I do intend to make trial this

night how she will endure it; this day praying for your Ma^{ty}. health and longe life; I humbly take my leave, your Ma^{ty}. most humble servant."

There is another charming letter from Kate to her husband in Spain which must be quoted fully, as it gives an intimate picture of her home-life, and expresses all her wifely longing and devotion, revealing the heart of a good and fragrant woman of the seventeenth century:—

"DEAR HEART,

"When Kiligrey came, I did hope that all things had been agreed on there, and that it was all in our good King to dispatch, which I was confident he would hasten all he could; but when Dick Grime* came, I perceived by your letter that you had not your answer: what that was I know not, for I thought you were agreed of all. Sir Francis Cottington tells me, that when he is dispatched you will come away presently, which puts me in very good comfort, for if I could once be so happy as to know the certain time of your coming I should be well satisfied. I have sent you some perspective glasses, the best I could get. I am sorry the Prince is kept at such distance that he needs them to see her.† I am afraid it is a sign, if he get her it will be long first. Yet we hear that the Prince, and the Infanta, and the Queen walked a great while in a garden together. Now Gresly‡ is despatched, I hope, by the next that comes after his arrival there, you will be able to send us some certainty. My lord, indeed I must crave your pardon that I did write you no more particulars of our pretty Moll. I did tell dry-nurse what you wrote to me, and she says you had one letter from her; and she has sent you word, by every one that has gone, that she was well and what she could do. But if you will pardon me this fault I will commit the like no more. She is very well, I thank God; and when she is set to her feet, and held by her sleeves, she will not go santly, but stamp and set one foot afore another very fast that I think she will run before she can go. She loves dancing extremely, and when the

* Sir Richard Graham, Buckingham's master of horse, who had returned with despatches.

† The Infanta.

‡ One of the Earl of Bristol's men.

saraband is played, she will get her thumb and finger together, offering to snap ; and then when Tom Duff is sung, then she will shake her apron ; and when she hears the tune of the clapping dance my Lady Frances Herbert taught the Prince, she will clap both her hands together, and on her breast, and she can tell the tunes as well as any of us can ; and as they change the tunes, she will change her dancing. I would you were here but to see her, for you would take much delight in her, now she is so full of pretty play and tricks ; and she has gotten a trick, that when they dance her she will cry Hah, hah ! and Nicholas will dance with his legs, and she will imitate him as well as she can. She will be excellent at a hat, for if one lay her down she will kick her legs over her head ; but when she is older I hope she will be more modest. Every body says she grows every day more like you than other. You shall have her picture very shortly.* I am very glad you have the pearls, and that you like them so well ; and am sure they do not help you to win the ladies' hearts. Yourself is a jewel that will win the hearts of all the women in the world ; but I am confident it is not in their power to win your heart from a heart that is, was, and ever shall be yours till death. Every body tells me how happy I am in a husband, and how chaste you are ; that you will not look at a woman, and yet how they woo you. Sir Francis Cotington was yesterday telling of me how you made a vow not to touch any woman till you saw me ; and though I was confident of it before they told me, yet it is so many cordials to my heart when they tell me of it. God made me thankful to him for giving of me you ! Dear love, I did verily hope I should a' had a lock of your hair by Killigrew, and I am sorry I had it not ; but seeing you have a conceit it may prove unlucky, it is well you sent it not, though I think it but an old wife's tale ; for I do assure myself it would not prove unlucky between us. But since you have a belief in it, I shall begin to think so too ; therefore let it alone. Dear heart, since I cannot have this, I pray will you, if you have any idle time, sit to Gerbere for your picture, that I may

* Balthasar Gerbier, in a letter to Buckingham, says : " Madame desires me to send your Excellency a portrait of herself and your sweet little lady, but the time of the departure of the vessels has been so short that I have been obliged to send that which was painted three years ago ; and for the little lady she has been painted in great haste, and only half finished ; the hands that crave a blessing on your Excellency are merely outlined."

have it well done in little? * If once I could have that I should think myself very happy. I beseech you grant me this request ; for since I must be barred of the principal, I must feed, as new lovers do, on the shadow ; and as would one to one grieve and sorrow, for I protest that is truly my part. I would I could tell when I might be relieved out of it. I am sure by this you know certain news about my being with child. I would I had been so happy, but since it is not so, I hope I shall be often : and I pray do you not trouble yourself at it, and I care not. I have seen his Majesty lately, but have not seen the picture Toby Mathew did ; but I hope the next time I shall. I do imagine what a rare piece it is being of his doing.† Since the Prince keeps that Gerbere has done for the Infanta, I hope nobody shall have the next he does for me ; for I do much desire to see a good picture of hers, for I hear her infinitely commended : she had need prove a good one, that the Prince may think his journey and delay well bestowed on her ; for I swear he deserves her be she never so handsome and good, to undertake such a journey for her ; and she had need make us poor wives some amends for being the cause of keeping our husbands from us ; but I think it is not her fault, for I warrant she would fain have despatched too.

"Indeed, my lord, I do excuse you to your friends for not writing, and I wonder they should take it unkindly knowing how full of business you are. My lady‡ is very well ; she is now gone into the country for ten days, and then she will return and stay till you return. She is very well I assure you. My brother Purbeck they say is very well ; but Sir Thomas Compton grows worse and worse.§ I am glad the King did write so

* Gerbier was on his way to Italy, where he hoped to meet Buckingham returning with the Prince and his bride. "I am advised," he writes, "before my return from Italy to make a pretty piece of the return from Spain with the Infanta ; for instance, a triumph by sea, representing a chariot with the Prince and Princess, Neptune driving his sea-horses, and your Excellency as Admiral of the Sea in the front of the chariot, holding in your hands the reins. . . . I think that this would be very beautiful and tend to immortalize this action of yours, having brought the Princess by sea, and would be a beautiful present to be presented on the part of your Excellency to the Prince.

† There is a reference to this picture by Sir Tobie Mathew in one of Buckingham's letters to the King.

‡ Buckingham's mother.

§ The Countess of Buckingham, in a letter to her son from Goodby, says that her husband, Sir Thomas Compton, went to Court to get the King's leave to follow the Favourite to Spain, "but the King perceiving by his over much talk that he was not

peremptorily for you to come away, for I hope now, if they would delay you longer you will be put off no longer. I am very much bound to my lady, that she is pleased to take my usage of her so kindly. I assure you I was very glad to see her : and I do as much love and honor I think as you do almost ; though I know if my own mother were alive I could not be so good a daughter as you are a son, yet I should love her very dearly too ; and if my own mother were alive, I think I could not love her better than I do my lady, for I am sure I have been ever much bound to her. When the King went to Newhall it was reported here in town he went to meet you there ; I would they had said truly. For my own part I am sure I should a' been very glad of it, and so I know would you ; but I am sure I have the most reason. My lord I have not yet been to Newhall, but I do intend shortly to go see how forward things are there. The walk to the house is done, and the tennis courts almost done, but the garden is not done nor nothing to the bowling green ; and yet I told Fotherbe, and he told me, he would set men to work presently. But I do warrant you they will all be ready before you come for Buely. I heard the wall is not very forward yet, and my lady bade me send you word that she is gone down to look how things are there. She says she is about making a little river to run through the park, it will be about sixteen feet broad : but she says she wants money. Thus hoping I have obeyed your commands in sending you word of all things you bade me I rest

“Your most dutiful wife till death,

“K. BUCKINGHAM

“I humbly thank you for the chain you sent me by Mr. Killigrew. I am sorry I sent for more now you have sent so many”

Later on, in August, Buckingham's wife wrote a sad letter to well in his head sent him home to me in a pitiful case. Dr. Hanton hath given him physic, but hath done him little good ; his opinion is that his excess of tobacco and wine hath hurt his brain ; so that I have sent him to Whittlewood Forest, where Mr. Napper hath promised me to do his best to recover him.” The Countess concludes her letter : “All goeth as well at home as your heart can imagine. My sweet Moll I hope will have a brother before it be long.” From Kate's letter we see that this hope was for a time disappointed.

him, telling him that she had been very ill, so sick and ill that her friends thought she was falling into a consumption.

"Indeed," she says, "I looked very ill and was ill, but I thank God and Doctor More and Miron I have recovered my good looks again, but if I tell you the truth, I must first thank you for the good news you sent me by my Lord of Andover, that your business was concluded, and that you hoped to come away when Sir Francis Cottington came to you; which was the best cordial to recover me that could be. The physician's physic could never have done me good if that had not come as it did, for merely melancholy was the cause of my sickness. I hope when we are together again, we shall have no more such partings; for if ever I should be unfortunate again, I am sure it would kill me: then might you have a finer and a handsomer, but never a lovinger wife than your Kate is."

It is evident from this letter that Buckingham had revealed at least some of his vexations and anxieties at Madrid. "It has been a great grief to me to think you should be so troubled," writes the poor Duchess; and then, after describing her illness, "it grieved me infinitely you should be so discontented; but I hope by this you are merrier, which for God's sake be, I beseech you, or else you will kill my heart."

Poor soul! There was a harder thing to bear than all other ill news, and in the lines that follow we see the frailty of Buckingham's nature, confessed by himself, yet (so forgiving are women!) forgiven by his wife.

"Dear heart," she writes, "I hope you make no doubt of that which has been the cause of my illness, for never creature has felt more grief than I have done since your going. And where you say it is too great a punishment for a greater offender than you hope you are, dear heart how severe God had been pleased to have dealt with me, it had been for my sins and not yours; for truly you are so good a man, that but for one sin, you are not so great an offender, only your loving women so well. But I hope God has forgiven you and I am sure you will not commit the like again. . . . I hope of your remove out of that wicked Madrid, and am very glad that you bring the Infanta with you, that all journeys may be ended, for I should have been in perpetual fear of your going again if she had stayed behind you."

In the same letter Kate Buckingham tells her husband that she has pressed the King to write a letter earnestly requesting the Prince and Buckingham to come away, "and I do assure myself the King has done it." The unhappy Duchess was not mistaken. On the 10th of August the King wrote peremptorily to his son to bring home his mistress quickly; "but if no better may be *rather than to linger any longer there to come without her.*" Then he adds, earnestly, "I know your love to her person hath enforced you to delay the putting in execution of my former commandment. I confess that it is my chiefest worldly joy that ye love her; *but the necessity of my affairs* enforceth me to tell you that you must prefer the obedience to a father to the love ye carry to a mistress."

Upon the receipt of this letter, Buckingham, who had been sick of an ague, used all his influence to induce the Prince to leave his hopeless love match and go home. But Charles was too infatuated and too sensitive even now to return alone, and though he used the King's letter as a threat to the Spanish Court, he still lingered on, using new arguments, in the vain hope that after all the Infanta would be allowed to accompany him.

Buckingham's patience was long ago exhausted, and he had every personal reason for returning. There were many candid friends at home who wrote long letters to him, pointing out that his continued absence was endangering his position with the King, and that the English people were beginning to hate him as the prime cause of the Prince's troubles. As early as March Sir Tobie Mathew, son of the late Archbishop of York, though a convert to Catholicism, made Buckingham acquainted with the cabals against him in the English Court. "Divers great men," he says, "are watching very close upon the King's heart to see if they can discover any hair's breadth of departure therein from you; to the end that by degrees they might take you out from thence." Designs were being formed against the Duke, the end of which "is to make your lordship very odious; and that being once soundly done, to go to the King as soon as they shall find courage enough in the truth and malice of others; and to beseech his Majesty that justice can be done against you in some exemplar course." Edward Clarke, a faithful servant of Buckingham, reported in August that Lord Bristol's "creatures" at home were magnifying their master's services to

the King to the detriment of the Duke. "They are many and malicious, and therefore worthy of your lordship's circumspection at least." Other friends wrote to the Duke advising him to get popularity by throwing over the marriage, and "making himself their darling by dashing the project." *

And the correspondent, one Turpyn by name, writing on the first of August from the Court, informs the Duke that some of his dependents are not being so well treated by the King as they might otherwise have been if Buckingham were in England. "I think there will shortly be foul weather, and that the storm will fall upon your lordship, but I have so read the King's disposition that I am no more affrighted than at hail which falls upon the slates when I am within doors."

Such letters as these written by his friends would have made Buckingham seriously uneasy if he had not an easy confidence that his influence over the King was still secure, and that the splendour of his personality would scorch up all his malignant enemies as soon as he set foot again in England. But at least they did not lessen his desire to return home. To the suggestion that he should gain popularity by breaking the Spanish match, Buckingham, to his honour, gave no ear, though from the beginning he realized clearly what Charles in his infatuation would not see, and though he repeatedly urged the Prince to give up the business, he was loyal to the last, and in his blunt careless way did his best to break through the meshes of Spanish diplomacy and bring things to a satisfactory conclusion. Though he had no subtlety, for adventurer as he was he was not a schemer by nature, he could take a broad view of his fortunes, and he saw clearly enough that the friendship of the Prince was as necessary to him now as the King's affections. James was growing old, and tired in body and mind. Perhaps it would not be long before the sceptre would drop from his hand for Charles to take. So Buckingham's natural loyalty to a friend was strengthened by self-interest. Fortunately for himself, whichever way the dice fell he was bound to win. If Charles brought back his bride in triumph, it would be a victory for Buckingham. If he returned without her, Buckingham could say, "I told you so," and while Charles would remember his friend's entreaties to come away, his jealous care for his Prince's honour, and his

* Hackett.

and shining as it set. They, whom good fortune has ranged under the laws and service of your Excellency—these, Monsieur, day and night pray to God for your very happy return, even to my little George your slave who day and night prays for *his good Lord Buckingham*. The kindness which your Excellency shows me, his poor father, places him under a great obligation, and makes it appear in my case that if the presence of your Excellency is to me a Paradise upon earth, your absence is to me a limb of misery, if there be one. The hopes which I have of your Excellency's happy voyage makes my heart leap with joy, and gives me an opportunity of saying to Madame whenever she is in extremity of grief that whatever occasion she may have of lamenting the departure of your Excellency, that she also has occasion for rejoicing, and should not regret that your Excellency has undertaken this journey."

After more "your Excellencies" and sundry pious hopes, the French painter goes on :

"The King with great affection has sent an express for the *little* portrait, a proof that the large and real one is ever in his heart. I have painted on the lid of the box the emblem of a sun-dial, the hand of which turns continually towards the pole-star, with these words, *Unde cumque ad idem*, signifying that your Excellency, though absent and transported to distant lands, that your heart and your soul, unchangeable, turn and aspire towards his Majesty continually. I think that the portrait is esteemed a very good one—I know, in my conscience, that it is exceedingly like—although I avow that Mr. Palmer does not like it ; but good gracious ! there is no greater enemy of science than presumption and ignorance. Madame so greatly deplores your absence that she cannot exist without having your image and shadow before her eyes ; consequently, I have been obliged to employ my time in finishing the great picture which I had commenced in oils, which Madame keeps, as her sweet saint, always within sight of her bed. I have finished it, and if it be not injured by the dust, it will always remain a proof of my skill. Madame desires me to send to your Excellency a portrait of herself and her sweet little lady, but the time of the departure of the vessels has been so short that I have been obliged to send that which was painted three years ago ; and for the little lady, one has been painted in great haste, and only half

finished ; the hands which crave a blessing from your Excellency are merely outlined."

The generally accepted idea that the Spanish marriage fell through owing to the personal quarrels between the favourites of Spain and England is an absurd exaggeration. The traditions of Spanish diplomacy were stronger than Olivares, the Prime Minister, and undisturbed by the tempers of a George Villiers. Yet it is true enough that Buckingham did not make things easier, and towards the end of the visit he had so direly offended Philip and his great minister that the Earl of Bristol wrote privately to James to let him know "that suspicions and distastes betwixt them all here and my lord of Buckingham cannot be at a greater height." One of the Spanish courtiers protested to Bristol that they would rather "put the Infanta headlong into a well" than into Buckingham's power.

Nevertheless, on July 28th Buckingham and the Prince wrote a joint letter to James, in which they still professed the optimism which was far from their real feelings. "We can now tell you certainly," they wrote, "that on the 29th of your August we shall begin our journey and hope to bring her with us." Two days later, however, Buckingham wrote privately to the King and gave him details of all the miserable difficulties which he had vainly tried to overcome. He described an interview with Olivares, in which he had pressed for the immediate journey of the Princess, for the sake of the Prince's own honour, for the relief of the anxiety and expenses of the English King, and for the favours which would be more speedily shown to the English Catholics.

"With this," continues Buckingham, "I entreated him to think of my poor particular, who had waited upon the Prince hither and in that distasted all the people in general, how he laid me open to their malice and revenge, when I had brought from them their Prince a free man, and should return him bound by a contract, and so locked from all posterity till they pleased her, how that I could not think of this obligation without horror or fear, if I were not his faithful friend and servant and intended thankfulness. He interrupted this with many grumbings, but at last said I had bewitched him ; but if there was a witch in the company I am sure there was a devil too."

Buckingham then relates how he went to the Spanish Prime

Minister's wife, "who I must tell you by the way is as good a woman as lives, which makes me think all favourites must have good wives." She promised to use her influence, but referred Buckingham to her husband, who received him again "doggedly."

"The next day," the writer goes on, "I desired audience of the Infanta. To taste her I framed this errand from your Majesty, that you had commanded me to give her a particular account of what you had done."

What the King had done was already too much to please his subjects. He had sworn, and, with the influence of the Lord Keeper Williams, had induced his Council to swear, to observe the Spanish articles of marriage relating to the liberty of faith of the future Princess and of any children of the marriage, and the other conditions laid down by the Pope in his dispensation.

Then Buckingham told the Infanta that the Prince would never go without, "which she liked very well of," and that his, the Favourite's, own thoughts "were bent to gain her the love of that people whither she was to go." He said that if one made a request to the Prince that English Catholics should no longer be fined for their faith, he would forward her plea to the King, who would certainly abolish such penalties.

James, upon receipt of this letter, did actually adopt the suggestion in order to give way to his utmost to the religious feelings of the Spaniards, but no concession hastened their consent to the departure of their Infanta with the Prince.

Fresh troubles cropped up owing to the behaviour of Charles's attendants. One of them, a young man named Henry Washington, fell ill, and upon his death-bed sent for a Jesuit to receive him into the Catholic Church. This aroused the Protestant hostility of his companions, and they barred the entrance to the bedchamber of the sick youth. Then when the priest came an English gentleman, or at least an Englishman, struck him in the face. This led, naturally, to reprisals on the part of the Spanish people who witnessed the outrage upon the priest, and but for the arrival of a magistrate, who laid hands on Verney, and Gondomar's intercession, a serious riot would have taken place. There was a demonstration of the English at the graveside of the poor boy Washington, but the news of the blow

to the priest had been carried to the Court, and was heard with indignation.

The courtiers moralized that if Englishmen behaved in this brutal way on the very soil of Spain, there was but little hope that their promises in regard to the English Catholics would be fulfilled. Charles thought it prudent to send Verney out of Madrid, but Philip, at the instigation of the Papal Nuncio, demanded a severe punishment of the offender. Charles was nettled, and sent back word that the magistrate should be punished for daring to lay hands on a gentleman of the English Court. The affair did not drop, and Philip, dropping all the courteous phrases which he had formerly lavished on the Prince, curtly informed him that if he wished to stay longer in Madrid he must dismiss all his Protestant attendants.

It was the last straw, and Charles, hot with anger, made up his mind, after all this weary and miserable waiting for the consummation of his marriage, to go back without a bride. His decision was hastened by an incautious speech by Olivares, who was wrangling with Buckingham, in which the Spanish minister, turned off his guard for a moment, confessed that the marriage had never been seriously contemplated by Philip until recent days, and that all previous negotiations had been merely diplomatic. Philip and his Court stood convicted of a long deceit, and the *amour propre* of the English Prince was deeply wounded.

A fleet under the Earl of Rutland was now cruising off the coast of Spain, and it was clear to the Spaniards that they could no longer keep the Prince in Madrid. There were some suspicions that his departure would be a secret flight, but when Olivares hinted this, Buckingham retorted haughtily that "if love had induced the Prince to steal out of his own country, fear should never make him run out of Spain; and that he would depart with an equipage such as became the Prince of Wales."

Now that the time of parting came the Spaniards became alarmed at the result of their obstinacy. At the eleventh hour they showed themselves willing to make concessions which they had long withheld, and fearing that the Prince's resentment would lead to a quarrel between the nations, they suddenly showed an eagerness to be civil and courteous. It was arranged now that Charles should sign a marriage contract, and without

waiting for a second dispensation from Rome, which was necessary, owing to the death of the Pope who had despatched the first, should leave a proxy in the hands of the Earl of Bristol for the celebration of marriage without his presence, to be delivered within ten days of the arrival of the new Pope's consent. The reason given out for the return of the Prince without his bride was that Charles would prevail upon the King, his father, to fulfil the pledges as to the liberty of the English Catholics before the arrival of the Infanta.

All this was duly promised by Charles in the most solemn manner, and on September 2nd he took his leave of the Spanish Court. Buckingham also paid his compliments to the King and Queen, but neglected to say good-bye to the Countess of Olivares. To the Prime Minister himself he gave a direct insult. Telling him that he should always entertain the kindest feeling towards the Royal family of Spain, he added bluntly, "but as for you, sir, personally, I shall make no professions of friendship with you, and you must always expect opposition at my hands." Olivares answered contemptuously, that as for Buckingham's friendship, he looked upon it as of no importance. It was enough for him that he had always acted as a gentleman and as a man of honour.

This interchange of insults was so noisily done, with high voices, that it attracted the attention of the bystanders, until Philip himself interrupted the scene. Buckingham's temper was so smouldering that he mounted his horse with a devil on his back, and defying the blazing sun, though the ague was still in his bones, rode sullenly ahead of the coach which carried his Prince away from the Court.

To the great public, which must always be duped by Kings and Princes, the going of the Prince of Wales seemed without ominous significance. He departed in pageantry, accompanied for part of the way by the King and his grandees, and when the final parting took place, a pillar was put up to celebrate the eternal friendship between the Royal guest and the Spanish monarch. It seems that the Spanish Court really bolstered itself up with the hope that all was well. They knew that the marriage contract had been signed, and that Charles had left the authority for a wedding by proxy. Joyful bells had rung in Madrid. The Princess was busy with English lesson-books, and



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he people called her already "the Princess of England." Neither the people, nor even Philip and Olivares, knew what was in the heart of the pale Charles—what burning rage, what bitter mortification, what bleeding vanity. Only Buckingham possessed that secret, and knew how the Prince was smarting and sore as he embraced his "royal brother," bent smiling over his hand, and waved his jewelled hat as the King's coach turned homeward.

Charles rode on at a breakneck pace towards the coast, eager to see the masts of Rutland's fleet, which assured him of getting to England again after these months of miserable emotion. A storm had been blowing. Perhaps the ships had been beaten out of their course. The thought was horrible.

But presently Buckingham perceived two horsemen riding at a gallop towards them. They were Englishmen. They were friends! Sir John Finnet, their old playmate and fellow-jester, was one of them, and the other Sir Thomas Somerset, who had been riding all night to greet them. The news given by Sir John, that the Earl of Rutland was at Santander with the fleet, made Prince Charles, according to his own words, look upon him "as one that had the face of an angel."

The bells of Santander were ringing, guns were firing salutes, and the people were *en fête*, as the Prince and his companions rode towards the port. But Charles, with a grave, white face, paid no heed to the demonstration; the English flag was waving over an English fleet, and the Prince of Wales was eager to shake the dust of Spain from his shoes. Though the gale was still blowing fiercely over the coast and it was late in the afternoon, he put off at once with Buckingham to the Earl of Rutland's ship, "The Prince." As a hollow mockery, there was a magnificent state-cabin, all sumptuous in its furniture, for the Infanta. Charles, perhaps, laughed bitterly, as he flung himself down in it, having no fair bride with him. But both to him and to Buckingham there was joy in the thought of seeing England soon, and to the Duke it was good to clasp the hand of Rutland, his father-in-law, and, drawing him aside, put eager questions to him about Kate and little Moll, and all the news of home.

They went on shore that night to accept the ovations of the people of Santander, who were bent on making the most of this historic occasion. But the night nearly ended in tragedy, for

the Prince's barge on going back could not make headway against the heavy waves, and was nearly swept to sea. Sir Sackville Trevor, however, on "The Defiance," aware of the danger, threw out ropes attached to buoys, with lanterns, and one of these being seized by the rowers, the Prince was drawn safely on board, after great and imminent peril. For a week they were kept in port by the storm, and between the Spanish people and the English there was a continual exchange of courtesies.

But with the Prince, as soon as he was under his own flag, it seemed as if all thoughts of the marriage to which he was pledged were abandoned for ever. Doubtless, in telling the tale of these last months to his friends, he found it increasingly difficult to retain his self-esteem, and all that had happened, now viewed as it were from a distance, was hateful to his pride. Before the English fleet hoisted sail for home, Ned Clarke, Buckingham's confidential servant, was on his way back to Madrid with a letter for the Earl of Bristol which would give our ambassador a dreadful shock. It was an order to withhold the proxy authorizing the marriage until Charles had received satisfaction that a rumour about the Infanta's wish to enter a convent had been disproved. It was an obvious excuse for delaying the pledges which had been so solemnly made, and to Bristol, left behind as the representative of Charles and the English nation, it was not only infinitely embarrassing, but a confession of dishonour, which, if he obeyed his Prince, he must share with him.

It was on October 5th, 1623, that the English fleet arrived at Portsmouth, and as the dawn rose the following day Charles and Buckingham, with their attendants, rode through London to York House. It was good to be home. It was good when Buckingham clasped in his arms his faithful wife, who had wept long in sorrow for her lord's absence, and now wept in joy for his home-coming. It was good when the news spread through the town on wings, and all London gave itself up to frantic joy. The Prince had come! Buckingham had brought him back, and the Spanish child had been left behind! The handsome Duke had scorned the old enemies of Spain, and had carried the Heir-apparent out of their clutches. All was well again, and even a Puritan might throw his cap into the air this

day, shouting "No Popery!" and "Long live Prince Charlie!" and "God bless the Duke of Buckingham!" The bells pealed out, with wild music clashing over London, and when the Prince came out in a coach with Buckingham to drive to Royston, where the King was, the crush of people was so great in the Strand that they blocked the progress of these two young prodigals. A great roar of "Long live the Prince of Wales," came a thousand times from ten thousand throats, and when at last the Royal coach had passed from them sober citizens had a kind of madness, and did things in the joy of this return which must have seemed strange and dreamlike afterwards. At the debtors' prison hands thrust between the bars for bread were filled with gold, so that these poor wretches could purchase their liberty, and a crowd of felons on their way to the gibbets at Tyburn were reprieved with the very nooses round their necks, and found themselves amazed with life. Merchant princes of Cheap-side gave banquets in the street, and invited all who passed to eat and drink. Not a window but had a candle lighting it in the darkness, hardly a street where a crowd did not dance round a great bonfire, whose flames gave a red glare to the sky. There were so many of these fires that London blazed with them, and from the heights beyond it seemed as if the great city itself were burning, as, alas! it burnt in the reign of this Prince's son. And at Royston, where Charles and Buckingham arrived, while London was thus given up to jubilation such as even London had seldom known in its long history, a poor old King, who had grown weary with long waiting, and had been distracted with many troubles and grave anxieties, stood on the staircase, and coming down to meet his Babie Charles and Dogge Steenie, threw his arms about their necks and wept like a child.

CHAPTER VIII

THE LAST DAYS OF JAMES I

HACKET, in his *Life of the Lord Keeper Williams*, describes in a vivid way the scene when the King's two "sweete boyes" gave the first account of their journey to their old "dad." For a long time they remained with him in an inner chamber, while in the ante-room the courtiers, excited by the return of the Prince and Favourite, listened eagerly in the hope of catching stray words by which they might learn or guess the truth about the Spanish match. Gusts of laughter reached their ears, and the loud voice of Buckingham talking eagerly, and the Prince's voice speaking passionately. Then the King came out, leaning on the arm of his son, and with a hand on his Favourite's shoulder. He seemed in good spirits, and filled with a melting joy at the home-coming of the two men he loved best in the world. Then before the courtiers he spoke of the broken promises of the Spaniards, and seemed to make it clear that the Spanish match was at an end because the restitution of the Palatinate to his daughter's husband was not agreed to by the Spanish King and Council.

"I do not like to marry my son with a portion of my daughter's tears," he said.

In the days that followed, Buckingham, and the Prince under Buckingham's influence, practically dictated the King's despatches to Lord Bristol, who still remained an Ambassador to Spain, in one of the most difficult situations ever held by a British ambassador. A man of strict honour, he believed himself to be bound absolutely by the promises of his Prince, among which was the definite pledge that within ten days of the arrival of the Papal dispensation the Prince's "proxy" for the marriage should be delivered. Yet in the letters he now received from

England, the King, and the Prince himself, with peremptory commands, ordered him to postpone the marriage until the Spaniards gave a definite assurance of restoring Frederic to his German inheritance. It was an impossible demand. Bristol knew well that nothing would induce Philip of Spain to take up arms against the House of Austria, and he believed not less surely that to postpone the marriage in order to enter into fruitless negotiations on such a vast subject as the balance of power in Europe, would be regarded by Philip as an insult to himself, and as a breach of honour on the part of England.

Lord Bristol, who had many friends at home, must have heard of wilder things on foot in England. The Prince of Wales was using passionate words about leading an English army to Madrid. Buckingham, to put himself right with the King and the people, was giving narratives of his adventures, in which he accused the Spaniards of black treachery and broken pledges. Before the Privy Council Buckingham had given such a narrative, full of that vivid colour and dark shading which was characteristic of his eloquence. He was now the most popular man in England, and with the Prince quick to second every statement he made, the most powerful. Bristol, away in Spain, was powerless against the influence of such a personality. His letters were but tame and unconvincing things when Buckingham was at the King's side to interpret them and comment on them. Yet Bristol did not hesitate to write plainly and boldly. Courteously, but without any flattering phrases, he rebuked both the King and the Prince for being careless of their honour. He reminded Charles of his promise about the proxy, and he made it clear that if he broke that pledge the friendship with Spain, which was the best guarantee of European peace, and the only hope for the exiled Elector, would be at an end.

To Buckingham and the Prince, this argument had no weight. They no longer wanted friendship with Spain, but war. James, who did not want war, blinked plain facts, and believed that a postponement of the marriage might lead to a settlement of the trouble in the Palatinate, and need cause no breach with Spain. Played upon by his two impetuous young men, he was angry with Bristol for what he thought was his obstinate and one-sided view of things. He was made to believe that his ambassador was more ready to serve the interests of Spain than

those of England. So Bristol was ordered once again to announce the postponement of the marriage. This time he obeyed, and the result was exactly as he thought. Philip was deeply mortified. His sister, the Infanta, who had been styled "the Princess of England," was shamed before the people. The Royal lover who had wooed her so ardently had jilted her without excuse. There must be no more of this folly. The Princess packed away her English lesson books, and Philip gave Lord Bristol to understand that the match was at an end. Poor Digby found that all his years of diplomacy had ended in failure, and in December, 1623, he was recalled to England. Philip and Olivares, who had the sincerest friendship for him, and believed that Buckingham was worse than the devil, imagined that his recall was a sentence of death. They offered him a Spanish dukedom, but Bristol rejected this offer with proud scorn as an insult to his honour. However friendly he had been to Spain, he had acted always in the interest of his King and country, and he would return with the knowledge that he had done his duty with unswerving zeal.

In our admiration for Bristol's character we need not blindly believe that his policy had been wise throughout. Gardiner, who makes a hero of him, defends every line of his policy with enthusiasm, yet Buckingham, who was no statesman, but swayed impetuously by personal pique and the passing mood, was acting more in accordance with the spirit of the nation in breaking with the Spanish alliance. Highly as he coloured his narrative, and carefully as he kept out the facts of his personal quarrels at Madrid, he did not lie when he accused the Spanish council of double dealing and prevarication. In the early days at Madrid he had jumped quickly to the truth that the Prince's journey was futile, and that no good would come to England by interminable discussions of impossible demands. And if Philip and his councillors were now flouted, it was a just punishment for their protracted and disingenuous diplomacy when the Prince was among them. True, Charles had made promises at the eleventh hour, long after Buckingham had urged him to have done with the business and go home, but in Madrid he was almost a prisoner, and had made such pledges owing to the pressure of an uncomfortable position. Digby, in standing so much upon punctilio, forgot how often the Spaniards had used

the advantage of the Prince's presence to persuade him into conditions utterly against the conscience of his nation, and having gained one concession, had again and again altered the terms of the original marriage treaty. Lord Bristol's honour and patriotism are beyond question, but it can hardly be denied that after the Prince's return he saw things too much from the Spanish point of view, and did not allow sufficiently for the just annoyance of Charles and the English people.

Neither Buckingham nor the Prince was without anxiety about Bristol's return, though they had used their influence to have him recalled. Buckingham was more afraid of that honest, plain-spoken, and spotless man of honour than of any other man alive. Doubtless, in telling the King many things about the happenings at the Spanish Court, Buckingham had kept back many others, and it did not suit the present purpose of either Charles or himself to have Bristol closeted with the King, giving chapter and verse for all that had taken place in Madrid. The King, after his first outburst of indignation against Spain, shuddered at the idea of an open conflict. He called out pitifully that he should not be asked to plunge into war in his old age. With Bristol at his elbow, he would be more convinced in his desire to reopen negotiations with Philip IV., and Buckingham's foreign policy would find a formidable opponent. So at all hazards Charles and George determined to keep Bristol away from the Court. They urged the King to send him to the Tower, but James, knowing in his heart that Bristol was innocent of even the shadow of treason, refused. He yielded, however, to the pressure of his two boys, so far as to order Bristol to confine himself to his house at Sherborne. The two adventurers from Spain felt that at that distance Lord Bristol was not so dangerous. Before leaving Spain our ambassador had written a letter to the Favourite, in which he pleaded for friendship in the interests of the nation. "The present estate of the King's affairs," he said, "requireth the concurrency of all his servants, and the co-operation of all his ministers, which maketh me desirous to make your Grace this tender of my service; that if there have happened any errors or misunderstandings your Grace would for that regard pass them over, and for anything that may personally concern my particular, I shall labour to give you that satisfaction as may deserve your friendship. And

if that shall not serve the turn I shall not be found unarmed with patience against anything that can happen to me."

That was a generous offer of alliance, but, when upon his return home he found that Buckingham preferred to be his enemy, he did not stoop to the flattery by which a greater man than he—Francis Bacon—had bought the friendship of the Favourite. He demanded a fair trial if he was under any accusation of misconduct, and to the interrogatories bearing on his past diplomacy, sent to him by Royal Commissioners, he answered with plain and straightforward details, which satisfied his examiners. The King was ready to receive him, but Buckingham would not permit the interview. He offered a bribe to a man who was one of the very few in England above such temptations. He dared to offer Lord Bristol to stop all further proceedings against him if he resigned his office as Vice-Chamberlain and kept to his manor-house at Sherborne. Bristol answered with a candour and courage that must have given a twinge of shame to Buckingham. He demanded to be cleared of all questions touching his honour. "For," he said, "in matter of my fidelity and loyalty towards his Majesty, the Prince and my country, I hope I shall never see that come into compromise, but shall rather lose my life and fortunes than admit the least stain to remain on me or mine in that kind."

So he remained exiled from Court, and Buckingham stood between him and the King, who would have given him greater justice. It is not to the credit of Buckingham that he allowed this great and good man to suffer for honest opinions honestly expressed. But Gardiner, who is always just in his verdict upon those whom he most condemns, finds extenuating circumstances for the Favourite's conduct. "To do Buckingham justice," he says, "it was not mere personal enmity by which he was actuated. If Bristol was to be kept at a distance, it was that James, and England through James, might be kept from falling back into the evil Spanish alliance. Even when Buckingham was engaged in an apparently personal quarrel, he had often great public ends in view. The interests of his country were so completely bound up in his mind with his own preferences and jealousies, that he came to think himself and England as inextricably combined."

With the King feeble now in mind and body, and Charles,

after the Spanish misadventure, believing his friend to be endowed with the highest wisdom, Buckingham was practically the sovereign lord of England and dictated its policy. He had formed a clear conception of his line of action. He would get the King to call a Parliament, and would appeal to the passions and the patriotism of the Lords and Commons. With the people behind him, he would formally break the treaties with Spain, and raise an English army and navy to co-operate with the German Protestants against the powers of Spain and Austria. But he would also seek another ally. France was jealous of the might of Spain, and would, he thought, in her own political interests, lend a force to thrust back the Spanish armies from Central Europe. There was reason to believe also that Prince Charles, having lost a bride in Spain, might find a wife in France. More than one messenger had come from Paris with the hint that the Princess Henrietta, the sister of the French King, could be had for the asking. One of these match-makers was an English friar named Grey, who visited Buckingham in Madrid, and boasting of his influence with Marie de Medicis, offered to persuade her to give her daughter to the Prince. Going back to Paris, he actually broached this question to the Queen-Mother, and then came to Buckingham in London with the news that she was willing to forward the match. It is difficult to know how much truth there was in his story, for when it got bruited about both Marie de Medicis and Buckingham repudiated every word of it.

But the idea had taken firm possession of Buckingham's impetuous brain, and in the new year of 1624 he obtained the King's consent to send Henry Rich, Viscount Kensington, to Paris upon a confidential mission to arrange the terms of a marriage treaty, or at least to feel the way to such an amiable alliance. In the mean time Buckingham proceeded with the other part of his plan, to obtain the confidence of the people through their representatives in Parliament, and to obtain a subsidy for the raising of a new army. But before he could achieve this success an episode happened which seemed likely at first to thwart his whole policy, owing to the vacillating character of the King, and the personal hostility of some great lords towards himself. The Spanish representatives in England, Iniosa and Coloma, gave their solemn assurance to James that

the Spanish troops would before long withdraw from the Palatinate, and that the territory they had occupied would be handed over to him as an arbitrator. The story was of course nothing but a diplomatic fiction, but to Buckingham's intense disgust James was prepared to consider it seriously, and commanded a body of Privy Councillors, who some years before had been appointed as Commissioners of Spanish affairs, to give their opinion as to whether or not there should be peace or war between England and Spain. Only three voted for war, Buckingham himself, who was a member of the Commission, Hay, Earl of Carlisle, and Secretary Conway, the most subservient flatterer of all that the Favourite was pleased to do. The other nine, including the Earl of Pembroke, who at this time was jealous of Buckingham's predominant influence in the State, Cranfield, now Earl of Middlesex, who had owed his rise to the Favourite, and had served him faithfully, though not with flattery, the Lord Keeper Williams, Lord Arundel, Secretary Calvert, Lord Chichester, the Marquis of Hamilton, and the Duke of Lennox, protested that they could come to no decision without examining the whole of the despatches relating to the marriage. This demand angered both the Prince and Buckingham as much as it frightened them. There were things in those confidential despatches which were best left buried. Buckingham lost his temper, and uttered hot and burning words. Hacket, in his *Life of Williams*, describes him "as a hen that hath lost her brood, and clucks up and down when she hath none to follow her." He was determined to balk the Privy Council's zeal for enquiry, and, hurrying down to Royston, used those powers of persuasion which the King could never resist. Charles accompanied him, but leaving his friend on guard, as it were, at the King's door, hurried back to tell the Council that James would not permit the examination of his secret despatches, and that as far as he, Charles, was concerned, he would never agree to reopen the question of marriage with the Infanta. The Privy Councillors, as a body, had no desire to go against his wish. They were almost unanimous in agreeing that the marriage treaty should be broken, and they agreed that if the Prince had no further liking for the lady that settled the matter. There was only one voice raised against this verdict, and that belonged to Cranfield, Earl

of Middlesex. Whether the Prince, he said, wished to marry the Princess or not, it was his duty to do so for reasons of State and the good that would redound to Christendom. "I suppose," he went on, "that the Prince ought to submit his distaste therein to the general good and honour of the kingdom."

Those rash words cost Middlesex his place and fortune. The Prince turned angrily upon him and taunted him with his origin as a London apprentice, and with his merchant's training.

"Judge if you will," he said, "of your merchandise, for you are no arbiter in points of honour."

Buckingham himself was not the man to forgive words which directly opposed his own opinions in a matter of supreme importance. Before long Lionel Cranfield found himself accused of corruption in his office as Lord Treasurer, an office that had been fatal to many predecessors. Of all men the Earl of Middlesex deserved his fate less. True he had amassed a large private fortune, and according to the custom of his time had got much fat "commission," as it would now be called, from the State contracts under his control. But he had been zealous in his duties, and was a man with a genius for economy (while making a nest-egg for himself) in a Government where for many years only prodigals had been in power. King James, shirking an open breach with Spain, was not inclined to see treason in Cranfield's speech at the Council's Board, and with a foresight denied to his Favourite, saw the danger of this attack upon a great officer of State. "You are a fool," he said, with a rare outburst of candour to Buckingham; "you are making a rod with which you will be scourged yourself." And to his son he said, with gloomy prophecy, "You will live to have your bellyful of impeachments."*

Neither the Prince nor Buckingham gave heed to the King's words, and the Lord Treasurer, examined by a Grand Jury of the Commons, was, after a stubborn defence, condemned to lose his office, to be imprisoned in the Tower during the King's pleasure, and to be fined £50,000.

The downfall of the merchant statesman was some time after the opening of the Parliament summoned by the King, against his own wishes, but under the pressure of his Favourite, whose will was now imperious even towards his sovereign lord and

* Clarendon.

master. It was opened in state on February 19, 1623, and James made a speech from the throne which explained the new foreign policy of his Government, and revealed how completely he had abdicated in favour of His Grace of Buckingham. He desired, he said, to impart to his Lords and Gentlemen a secret, and matter of great importance. "Give me your free and faithful counsels in the matter I propose, of which you have often heard, the match of my son, wherein as you may know I have spent much time with great cost, in long Treaties, desiring always therein (and not without reason hoping to have effected my desires) the advancement of my State and Children, and the general Peace of Christendom, wherein I have always constantly laboured, depending upon fair hopes and promises. At the earnest instance of my Son I was contented (although it was of an extraordinary nature) to send him to prosecute his desires in Spain, and for his more safety sent Buckingham (in whom I have ever reposed most trust of my person) with him, with this command, *Continually to be present with him, and never to leave him, till he had returned again safely unto me.*"

After expressing with many curious and characteristic metaphors his disappointment at the failure of the mission, James referred his Parliament to a more detailed narrative of the treaties which would be given to him by Charles, Buckingham, and the Secretary of State.

But neither Charles nor the Secretary shared in the promised narrative. It was the hour of Buckingham's great part in the drama of English history, and he was determined to be actor and manager, and to take the centre of the stage in the full light of the public eye. It was a glorious opportunity to stand forth and let the splendour of his presence, the supremacy of his position, be recognized by the nation over whom he was then king in all but name. As a king, therefore, he received the Lords and Commons, not in the Painted Chamber of the Upper House, but in the great hall where formerly they had been received by the actual sovereign. Buckingham was a daring man! No wonder that proud lords like Pembroke murmured at this extraordinary position of the Favourite, by which they felt themselves humiliated.

So in the great hall of the palace he stood magnificent, his head held high, his handsome face lighted up by the excitement

and pride of this hour upon the stage, surrounded at a little distance, as a monarch stands, by a great press of peers in their robes, with the King and the Prince behind him. Perhaps some of the Lords spiritual and temporal had expected a defence from him, but the sight of him there, clothed in his Ducal dignity, so proud, so arrogant in his graciousness, told a different tale, and when he spoke it was not a defence of his actions, but a defiance. It was as direct a challenge to Spain as though he had plucked off his jewelled glove and flung it before the ambassadors of the Spanish King.

It was really a masterly piece of oratory, studiously blunt and plain-spoken, as though coming from the lips of a man who desired neither to hide nor to gloss over any of the facts, but to tell all in an honest, simple fashion, so that his peers might make their own decision upon the Spanish treaties. But its simplicity was like that of Mark Anthony's oration over the body of Cæsar, and every sentence was an indictment of Spain and a subtle demonstration of the speaker's own sagacity and honourable dealings. He divided his narrative into six parts. First, the motive of the Prince's journey to Spain. This was the desire of the King and Prince Charles to end the shifty negotiations of the Spanish Court, and to exact a definite pledge for the restitution of the Palatinate. Then, second, the visit of the Prince and the Marquis to Madrid. Buckingham described, with remarkable astuteness and a covert sense of humour, the high-sounding phrases and insincere courtesies with which Olivares, the Spanish Prime Minister, received his visitors, the promises given and then broken, the zigzag course of their diplomacy, the continual importunities of the Court and the ecclesiastics to bring the Prince over to the Catholic faith, the unswerving hostility of the Junta of Divines to the proposed marriage, when the Prince's steadfastness to the English Church was made clear to them.

In the third part of his narrative, Buckingham described the shiftiness of Olivares over the question of the Elector Palatine, and his final statement when hard pressed that the King of Spain must never fight against the Emperor, for they would not employ their forces against the House of Austria. Then, said Buckingham, "his Highness protested to the Count: 'Look to it, sir, for if you hold yourself to that there is an end of all; for without this you may not rely upon either marriage or friendship.'

By this time the Prince is grown cheap and vulgar in the Court of Spain, so that they will scarce bestow a word upon him, and the Conde came very seldom to see him." Then, the Duke of Buckingham discovering all the underlying treachery of the previous negotiations, the Prince decided to return home.

In the fourth and fifth parts of his narrative, Buckingham described the behaviour of Lord Bristol with regard to the delivery of the marriage proxy, and accused him bluntly of thwarting the wishes of his King and Prince, and of allowing himself to be influenced by the Spanish Court. Finally, Buckingham, summing up these long-drawn negotiations, put the question to the Lords whether the King should still rely upon the Spanish treaties, or, setting them aside, "trust in his own strength and stand upon his own feet." *

To do Buckingham justice, it must be admitted, even by his enemies, that there was not a word of untruth in his long story. Looking at the Spanish journey now, in the clear light of history, we see the folly of the two adventurers, the weakness of the Prince which led him to make rash promises, broken as soon as he set foot on English soil again, and the petulant temper of Buckingham himself, which added personal quarrels to diplomatic conflicts. All this was omitted, naturally, from his explanation, but his story was true in substance and detail, and was a perfectly fair indictment of the Spanish Court from the passionate point of view of a man who had played a chief part in the adventure. Prince Charles, who stood by his side, supported every statement of his friend, and among the Lords who listened to Buckingham's flowing speech, there was not one who doubted its sincerity, or disagreed with its inevitable conclusions. Even Pembroke, who had been openly hostile to the Favourite, was drawn over to his side, and gave his vote with the other peers for the definite abandonment of the Spanish treaty.

Buckingham had gained his greatest triumph, and received the applause and homage of the English nation, as the champion of the old traditions of patriotism. Iniosa, the Spanish ambassador, furious at the charges brought against the King's Court, violently demanded satisfaction for Buckingham's

* Buckingham's narrative is fully summarized in Rushworth's contemporary "Historical Collections."

insulting language against his Sovereign Lord and Master, and vowed that the Favourite's head would be too small a penalty for such accusations against the honour of his country. But by a vote of both Houses of Parliament the Duke's "Relation," as it was called, was justified, and a Committee of the whole House signified to the King that "the Duke may be encouraged to proceed in his faithful service to the State." The Commons then proceeded to offer their subsidies to the King for the prosecution of a war for the relief of the German Protestants of the Palatinate, on condition that the Spanish treaties should be annulled. This offer was accepted by James, who, in one of his last speeches to Parliament, vowed that he would regain the Palatinate, even though, in his old age, he should have to lead an army in person against the enemies of his son-in-law. Not a penny piece voted by his faithful Commons should go to anything but this war, and if needs be he would sell his own jewels.

"Assure yourselves," said the poor old man, who had no stomach for this business, but spoke as the mouthpiece of his son and Buckingham, "my delay hitherto was upon hope to have gotten it without a war. I held it by a hair, hoping to have gotten it by a Treaty, but since I see no certainty that way, I hope that God, who hath put it into your hearts so to advise me, and into my heart to follow your advice, will so bless it, that I shall clear my reputation from obloquie, and in despite of the Devil and all his instruments show that I never had but an honest heart."

It was not without continual persuasion, and, sometimes, angry argument, that the Prince and Steenie had brought James to such decisive words. These two young men were impatient of the old King's doubts and hesitations, his hanging back from an open breach with Spain, his personal interventions to thwart their war policy. To tell the truth, Charles and his friend were impatient of the King altogether, though he had loved them both so fondly, and the Prince was eager to play the *rôle* of the King before the crown was on his head. They ignored him as much as they could, and when they could not do without him used him purely as the figure-head of their own policy. Buckingham bullied the old man, who had been to him the kindest of masters, the most generous of kings. When James was weakly

endeavouring to find a compromise, thrusting back with his failing hands the dreadful vision of a Spanish war, Buckingham wrote letters in which the insolence is hardly veiled, urging him "to resolve once constantly to run one way." "For," he said in one such letter, "so long as you waver between the Spaniards and your subjects, to make your advantage of both, you are sure to do it with neither."

When, therefore, James was put up by the Prince and Steenie, and, like a Punch thwacking a stick with the concealed hands of the showman down below, flung out a bold challenge to the Spanish-Austrian troops in the Palatinate, Buckingham had gained the Royal and national sanction necessary for the bold foreign policy which from this time involved him in continual care.

The world, it seemed, was at his feet, and the power of a great nation was in his hands. A war fever took possession of the English people, and they made bonfires to toast Spanish effigies, and to carry Buckingham's glory in tongues of fire to the sky. Parliament made itself the servant of his policy. A host of English gentlemen, the flower of England's youth and gallantry, offered their swords to win victories for him on German soil. The Prince, who would soon be King (for James was ailing, and old age was creeping into his heart and bones), was eager to support everything suggested by the magnificent Duke, who was, so Charles thought, the greatest statesman of his age and a masterly diplomatist. To this great height had George Villiers come.

Buckingham now turned his thoughts to France, for, as we have seen, the hope of a French alliance was the chief feature of his programme for the recovery of the Palatinate. With a French army co-operating with English and German allies, Austria and Spain would soon be flogged out of the country, and Buckingham would be an even greater man. It was a simple scheme on the face of it, with many plausible arguments in its favour, but Buckingham left Richelieu out of his reckoning, and forgot the lesson of the Spanish treaty, when Charles was bargaining for a Catholic wife. At the beginning, however, of these diplomatic negotiations with France everything seemed to promise a brilliant success. The young and handsome Henry Rich, newly made Earl of Holland, had a gay and amiable time

in Paris, and his letters to the Prince and Buckingham were pleasing to both of them. He quickly won his way into the heart of the Queen-Mother, and all the ladies of the French Court loved him for his gallantry. He was indeed an admirable ambassador of Love, and his reports upon the Princess Henrietta Maria did credit, at least, to his literary style and to his intimate acquaintance with the Blind Boy. To Buckingham he described the charms of the French Princess, then a maid of fifteen years. "My Lord," he wrote, "she is a lovely sweet young creature. Her growth is not great yet, but her shape is perfect." The ladies of the Court, knowing his mission, whispered to him slyly on his arrival that she had seldom put on a more cheerful countenance than that night. "There were some," he said, "that told me I might guess the cause of it." This gallant ambassador did not bother his head with such trivial matters as the political schemes of France. He was quite sure that if the marriage took place between Charles and Henrietta, the French army would act with the English in the Palatinate. When Charles suggested that a political alliance should precede a marriage treaty, the Earl of Holland waived the objection on one side by an assurance that all things would come right, especially as the piquante little Princess was "for beauty and goodness an angel." He told a pretty tale how he lent her a miniature of the Prince which hung about his neck, and "she opened it with such haste as showed a true picture of her passion, blushing in the instant of her own guiltiness." * These messages flattered the vanity of Prince Charles, and awakened, perhaps, the romantic instincts of his young manhood, which had been so cruelly nipped by the misadventure in Spain. But both the Prince and Buckingham were playing for higher stakes than a pretty woman, and they recognized that Henry Rich was not the man to carry through a treaty with France, however admirable he was in an embassy of the heart. It was decided, therefore, to send out James Hay, Earl of Carlisle, who in addition to being a gallant fellow, and very splendid in his presence and behaviour, was also, under his fine foppishness, a shrewd Scot and cautious diplomat. Hay went, therefore, a second time to the French capital—it will be remembered that he had ridden with silver horseshoes through the streets of Paris a few years before—

* The Cabala.

and with the Earl of Holland as his colleague took the lead in the official negotiations with Louis and his minister, the great Richelieu. Edward Herbert Cherbury, our ambassador in France, whose chivalrous but choleric temper has been described in earlier pages of this book, had fallen into disfavour by his candid words of warning to the Prince and Buckingham. With a close knowledge of the character of the French King and his all-powerful minister, he knew that unless they were bound by most formal pledges forced upon them by political necessity they would never employ French soldiers against a Catholic Power in the cause of Protestantism. True they were jealous of Spanish intrusions into middle Europe, but they had no sympathy with the Bohemians who had revolted against the Austrian yoke, nor with the German Protestants of the Palatine. For political reasons they were not averse to an alliance with England, but Richelieu was determined to let England do all the fighting. Diplomatist as he was, he was also a Cardinal of the Catholic Church, and in a war which was essentially a religious conflict, France, if she played any part, would be on the side of her national faith. Herbert pointed out at least something of this truth about the workings of Richelieu's subtle brain, and he was not thanked for his candour. It led, indeed, to his recall, for Buckingham, who had been his patron, was always most displeased when the truth did not tally with his personal desires.

But Hay, Earl of Carlisle, was not slow to perceive the same elements of danger in his negotiations with the French Government. They were not averse to the marriage, provided the conditions were entirely satisfactory to themselves, but they showed extreme caution in their discussions over the Palatinate, and steadily, though courteously, postponed giving any definite pledge on the subject. The situation was a most curious and exact parallel of all that had happened over the Spanish negotiations, and it was amazing that the Prince and Buckingham, after their bitter experience with one treaty for a Catholic wife, should have been so utterly blind that they could not see the inevitable repetition of the difficulties and disappointments. Richelieu certainly handled the business much more adroitly, and far less offensively, than Olivares. He kept the English ambassadors on the tenter-hooks of expectation that he would carry out their schemes of a military alliance. But while he



CARDINAL DE RICHELIEU

FROM A PORTRAIT BY PHILIPPE DE CHAMPAIGNE IN THE LOUVRE

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thus hoodwinked them—the truth being that Buckingham himself was easy to hoodwink, because he had staked his future on nothing more substantial than false hopes—he laid down the conditions of the marriage treaty upon precisely the same lines as those demanded by Spain. And Buckingham, who had destroyed the Spanish treaty amidst the applause of the English nation, now used his influence with the Prince to accept terms which had so recently been denounced as an outrage upon the conscience of his country.

James, old as he was now, and racked with rheumatism so that he was almost a cripple, had strength of mind enough to refuse for a long time to bind himself to abolish the penal laws against the Catholics, and to give them absolute liberty of worship, but under the continual pressure of the man who was still called his Favourite, though now his master, his protests grew weaker with every argument. The Prince himself was not inclined to agree with the French conditions, and more than once or twice was so enraged with the demands of Richelieu (who posed as being coerced into making severe conditions in the treaty by the Pope and the Sacred College at Rome) that he was on the point of throwing up the whole business in favour of seeking a Protestant wife. But he was a partner in Buckingham's foreign policy, and completely under the dominating influence of the Duke, so that he also yielded step by step to the French conditions, buoyed up, as Buckingham himself, by the hope that a French army would co-operate with English forces in Germany. Richelieu pandered to these hopes by vague promises, and by ostentatious movements of French troops. And thus dangling a bait under the noses of Prince Charles and his adviser, he drew them on, further and still further until he had them fast bound in the spider's web of his diplomacy. At first a letter had been demanded from the English King promising liberty of worship in his realm. Then when that was conceded, a treaty with formal clauses must be privately signed by the King, his son, and a Secretary of State. Then, later on, that must be submitted and sanctioned by the Privy Council. Then James must show his sincerity by at once stopping all cases instituted against English Catholics for the exercise of their faith. Carlisle, still acting as ambassador in Paris, was passionate with indignation against these stipulations,

which he knew were in utter defiance of the strongest prejudices of Parliament, and of the majority of the English people, and he vainly implored the King and the Prince to be more chary of their concessions to the French Ambassador in England. He believed, and was bold enough to suggest, that Buckingham was playing too much into the hands of France.

This, indeed, must be admitted. A new ambassador, Effiat by name, had come from Paris to a place Ville-aux-Clercs, and with this man Buckingham was so strangely intimate, that Pembroke and other lords began to smell something like treason. Buckingham avowed to Effiat that he had staked his reputation upon the marriage treaty, and that its failure would be his ruin. At this time he was very ill, with that mysterious illness from which he seems to have suffered severely at different periods of his life ; but his brain was unceasingly active to bring his great scheme to a conclusion which he believed would result in the accomplishment of all his hopes. With Effiat, therefore, making promises to James which Richelieu had no intention of fulfilling, and with his own powers of persuasion brought to bear upon the King and Charles, Buckingham at last overcame all scruples, and James put his signature to the letter and treaty by which he solemnly undertook to grant to Henrietta Maria, to her Catholic attendants, and to the English Catholics, a complete liberty of worship, agreeing also that any children of the marriage should be brought up in the Catholic faith of their mother until ten years of age.

There was nothing disgraceful in these articles on the French side, judged from the modern view of religious toleration. Extreme Protestants have, of course, inveighed against the treaty, as against the Spanish treaties, as the handiwork of the Scarlet Woman, and the devilish machinations of the Roman priesthood. That, of course, is senseless bigotry, and Cardinal Richelieu was more worthy of his ecclesiastical office in safeguarding the faith of the French princess, and endeavouring to secure by the marriage happiness and liberty for the Catholics in England, than in many other actions of his remarkable career. But the folly and fault of Buckingham and his Prince were of a political and not of a religious character. In an age when religious toleration was unknown, or, if known, counted as a vice and not as a virtue, they defied the passions and prejudices

of the nation and its Parliament, and not only defied them, but betrayed them.

During the course of these negotiations with France Buckingham was the victim of a plot which gave him great anxiety at home. His supreme power in the nation was of ominous import to Spain, and the Spanish ambassadors in this country had now but one desire: to cause his ruin. It would not have been surprising in those days if they had set assassins upon the Favourite, to rid the world of him by one stab in the back. But they endeavoured to kill his reputation with the King, and by lies hardly less murderous than cold steel. The two ambassadors Iniosa and Coloma had been reinforced by a priest named Lafuente, who had arrived with secret instructions from Philip's Court. His papers, however, had been stolen from him near Amiens, where his coach had been held up by armed men disguised with false beards. It was commonly believed that these were servants of the Marquis of Hamilton, who were acting as amateur highwaymen in the interests of Buckingham and the English council. Be that as it may, and it is not extremely improbable, though perhaps Richelieu knew more about it, when Lafuente reached England he had no credentials, and the loss of his papers had aggravated his bitterness against Buckingham. In his first audience with the King he denounced the Duke's insolence at the Spanish Court, and then joined Iniosa and Coloma in a plot to destroy the King's faith in his Favourite. Their greatest difficulty was to get the private ear of James. Buckingham was watchful, and seldom gave them a chance of being alone with the King. Seizing an opportunity, however, while Iniosa engaged the Prince and Duke in conversation, Coloma thrust a paper into the King's hands, and begged him to read it privately. When James opened it, he found that it contained a request to give a secret audience to Carondolet and their emissary from the Spanish Court, who would act as an intermediary between the Spanish ambassadors and the English King. James, who was in a nervous and gloomy state of mind, owing to the impetuous war policy of his Favourite, granted the audience, and Carondolet took the opportunity of persuading him against the war, and suggesting, in a dark manner, that His Majesty was virtually a prisoner in the hands of an unscrupulous adventurer, who was using him as

a tool for his private animosities. James admitted that Buckingham had "he knew not how many devils in him" since the Spanish journey, but demanded definite proofs of any guiltiness on the part of Buckingham before he took action in the matter. Such proofs were not forthcoming, and this first plot failed. Buckingham was not ignorant of the intrigue, for it happened that Carondolet was a man of loose morals, and he had a mistress in London who was a paid spy of the Lord Keeper Williams. To Williams she had taken the whole story of the secret interview with the King, and the Lord Keeper, anxious to regain Buckingham's favour, which he had temporarily lost by opposition to the breaking of the Spanish treaties, hastened to give an account of it to the Duke. He first went, however, to the Prince.

"In my studies of divinity," he said, after explaining the source of his information, "I have gleaned up this maxim, 'It is lawful to make use of the sin of another.' Though the devil make her a sinner, I may make good use of her sin."

"Yea," said Charles, with a contemptuous smile on his thin lips. "Do you deal in such ware?"

"In good faith," said Lord Privy Seal, "I never saw her face."

Buckingham was not slow in scotching the snakes about him, and a visit to the King at Theobald's dispelled the gloomy suspicions of his old master.

But, failing in this first attempt, the Spaniard made a more desperate venture to break Buckingham. In April of the year 1624, Lafuente obtained another interview with the King, and after accusing the Duke of filthy conduct in Spain, charged him with the treasonable revelation of State secrets to certain members of Parliament. Iniosa, a few days later, poured subtle poison into the King's ears, and directly accused Buckingham of conspiring to dethrone the King in the event of his refusing to make war on Spain.

James was horribly perturbed. The thought that Buckingham, upon whom he had lavished his love for years, who had been nearest to his heart among all others, should conspire against him in his old age was torture and anguish to him. He tried to thrust back the belief that even a word of the charge could be true. But an accusation made so plainly and so

confidently could not be ignored. The King knew Buckingham's impetuous nature, how easily he was carried away by passion and egotism; and in those days treason set traps about the feet of men, entangling even noble natures in devilish snares.

Poor old James took the wisest course, and instead of nursing secret suspicions that stung him like scorpions, he told Buckingham what had been said against him. Immediately Iniosa left him he drove to St. James's, on his way to Windsor; and as Charles and Buckingham came to greet him, he burst into tears, and repeated the conversation which had just shattered his peace of mind. The accusation, he said, was so formal and definite that Buckingham must take means to clear himself.

The Duke was startled and deeply outraged by this attack upon his honour and loyalty, and he too shed tears. Though the King invited him to go on to Windsor in his company, he refused to stay in the Royal presence until his innocence was acknowledged. He would rather, he said, go straight to the Tower and declare himself a prisoner. So Prince Charles joined his father, and Buckingham went home to Wallingford House.

Here the Lord Keeper Williams visited him. He found the Duke lying on his couch, so overwhelmed with grief that he could scarcely obtain an answer to his questions. He urged Buckingham with great earnestness to go at once to the King, and not to suffer his enemies to still further poison His Majesty's mind against him.

But James, quite wisely and justly, decided to have the matter sifted to the bottom. Iniosa was required to put his accusations into writing, and to state his proofs. The first was easy to the Spaniard, whose hatred to Buckingham was intense, but he was compelled to admit the charges were not such as could be made to appear by legal and judicious proofs.

His statement was then laid before the Privy Council, but, after carefully examining it, they reported to the King unanimously that they had never heard any traitorous expression proceed from Buckingham's mouth, and that there was no truth in the Spaniard's accusations.

To James it was a real source of joy that his "dogge Steenie" was honourably acquitted of such charges, and his anger was now turned upon the ambassadors, who were recalled to Spain.

He wrote to Philip, demanding that they should be punished, but afterwards, having submitted to two or three days' imprisonment, they were released and rewarded. "In the Court of Spain," says Rushworth, "Buckingham's name was odious, and the Prince's honour of little value, and the King's reputation at low ebb."

Buckingham, now relieved of his grave anxiety at home, pressed forward his own policy. But the ink was hardly dry upon documents which passed between England and France when he began to realize the utter insincerity of Richelieu with regard to a military alliance. A rabble army of Englishmen—the sweepings of the gaols, pressed men, and vagabond soldiers of fortune—had been raised by means of the subsidies of Parliament, and commanded by English gentlemen with but little knowledge of war. This force was to be under the generalship of the Elector Palatine's most able general, Mansfeld, who now arrived in England to consult with Buckingham and the English Council as to the direction of the war. This soldier, Count Ernst von Mansfeld, the illegitimate son of a German Prince who had served with brilliant distinction with the Spanish forces under Alva in the revolt of the Low Countries, was a man of remarkable character. He had served as quite a youth in the Austrian campaign in Hungary, but on account of being disappointed over his father's inheritance, turned over to the Protestant side, and became the bitterest enemy of the Austrian and Spanish Houses. When the Bohemians revolted against the Hapsburgs, and gave their crown to Frederic, Elector Palatine, Mansfeld offered his sword to that Prince, and in spite of many defeats, which resulted in the exile of Frederic, carried on a guerilla war against the Catholic armies. Then with extraordinary daring he cut his way through the Spanish-Austrian forces to the United Netherlands, and placing his sword at the disposal of the Dutch Republicans, helped them to inflict severe punishment upon their Spanish foes.

Such was the man who now came to England to take command of the army raised for the rescue of the Palatinate. A swash-buckling soldier of fortune, the hero of his men, but utterly unscrupulous, and a freebooter who supported his forces by the plunder of both friends and foes, he seemed to Bucking-

ham the ideal leader of an avenging army. His presence in England caused great excitement, and inflamed the war fever, which, for a brief period only, took possession of the people.

Buckingham's plan was for Mansfeld to make his way through France, joined there by a strong French force, and strike straight at the heart of Germany, then garrisoned by Spanish-Austrian troops. He as Lord Admiral would employ his fleet for the transport of the army from Dover to Calais. But it was now that he saw the hollowness of the faith he had placed in French promises. Richelieu demurred strongly against the proposed passage through France, and came down from his high-sounding words as to a strong military alliance, to a promise, still of a vague and indefinite character, of a detachment of French cavalry. There was some excuse, perhaps, for the objection to the passage of the English army through France. On the way to Dover, on their own English soil, the forces under Mansfeld had struck terror into the hearts of the country-people by shameful excesses and freebooting. The English officers, who belonged to some of the oldest and noblest families, could not produce any form of discipline among such a rabble mob of scoundrels, who got completely out of hand. At Dover, and to the great joy of peaceful Kentish citizens, they at last got on board the English fleet, which was as rotten as the character of the troops who overcrowded them, and set sail for Calais. Here they lay-to, waiting for permission to land and march through the country, but Buckingham's negotiation in England was fobbed off with every possible excuse by Richelieu and the French King. After a disastrous delay, during which disease broke out on board, Mansfeld would wait no longer, and gave the order to sail for Zealand, where he believed his old masters, of the Dutch Republic, would readily give him permission to pass through their territory. But the reputation of his army had preceded him, and the Dutch, who were themselves suffering from a hard season and a scarcity of food, would not suffer the landing of a force which would be like a plague of locusts along the track of their march. A terrible situation now faced our unfortunate English troops. Penned up like rats in foul ships, they were stricken with pestilence and famine, "so that," says Rushworth, the contemporary chronicler, "they were thrown into the sea by multitudes, insomuch that scarce a third part of

the men were landed, the which after also mouldered away, and the design came to nothing."

There were men in England, who moralised, not light-heartedly, on the subject of these disasters. One of them, John Chamberlain, in a letter to Sir Dudley Carleton, expresses the bitterness of his feelings in gloomy words: "The time hath been when so many English as have been sent into those parts, within those six or eight months, would have done somewhat and made the world talk of them. But I know not how, we that have been esteemed in that kind more than other nations, do begin to grow by degrees, less than the least, when the basest of people in matter of courage dare brave and trample upon us. I have known the time when they durst not have offered the least of these indignities we have lately swallowed and endured."

To Buckingham the failure of the expedition was a tragic disappointment; to King James it was a death-blow. He had been forced into the war utterly against his wish. Physically timid, and intellectually opposed to bloodshed, he had endeavoured all his life to play the part of peacemaker in Europe, with the unfortunate result of weakening the hands of his ambassadors abroad, who could never enforce their words by any hint of decisive action. France, Spain, and Austria laughed in their Council Chambers at a nation which, in the reign of Elizabeth, had inspired them with a wholesome fear. When, therefore, James was at last coerced by his impetuous son and Favourite into a military campaign, it was all the more terrible to him that English arms should suffer ignominious defeat, not in the fighting-line, but by pestilence and famine. The poor old King had long been ailing, a victim to gout and rheumatism, and now, on the 5th of March, 1625, he was seized by a "tertian ague." The Marquis of Hamilton, who had been one of his closest personal friends, had first died, and this event gravely affected the King (though they had often squabbled together), so that he had not the spirit to struggle against his illness. "I shall never see London more," he said, with gloomy prophecy. Getting a little better, he was removed on the 12th of March to Hampton Court, and in his last days turned to the man he loved best in the world after his son—perhaps before his son, for he had less in common with the cold Charles. Buckingham

stayed by his bedside, eager in his warm-hearted way to do all he could to comfort his old master, for whom, we cannot help believing, he had a genuine affection. The King was a querulous patient, and refused to take the medicine pressed upon him by his physicians. Instead, he applied to Buckingham for a mixture which the Duke, in his own illness, had had from a Dr. Remington at Dunmow, to the great benefit of his health. According to Sanderson, a contemporary writer, this was a posset of milk and ale, hartshorn and marygold flowers, ingredients harmless and ordinary. The King drank it, but grew worse after taking it, and it was natural that his physicians, whose skill was flouted by him, complained indignantly against the interference of the Duke. One of them, a doctor Craig, spoke so heatedly and wildly, that he was at once banished from the Court. The Favourite's mother, the Countess of Buckingham, who was also close in attendance upon the King, next applied a plaister to the King's body in the hope of relieving his pain. In a Court where the Villiers family had many enemies, and at a time when death was often the subject of dark suspicions and horrible accusations, it was an injudicious act, and Buckingham himself remonstrated with his mother. But the Countess, who was a strong-willed woman, persisted in having her own way, and the plaister was applied. It now became evident, however, that the King was dying. The Lord Keeper Williams, who was still out of favour with Buckingham, for having with singularly foolish words advised his resignation of office as Lord Admiral, to become Lord Steward in the place of Hamilton, claimed his right to give spiritual comfort to the Sovereign, and stayed in the chamber day and night, without changing his dress. Kneeling by the bedside, he said that he had come to exhort the King to set his house in order, for his days would be few in this world. "I am satisfied," said the King, who, though a coward in life, was not afraid now to face his Royal brother, Death. "I desire you to assist me in preparing to go hence, and to be with Christ, whose mercies I pray for and hope to find." He had a secret interview with his son, and afterwards received the sacrament. Then on the night of Friday, March 27th, 1625, he raised himself for a moment on his pillow, and with the words, *Veni, Domine Jesu*, fell back again, and gave out his last breath, peacefully.

The disgrace of the two physicians, Dr. Eglisham and Dr. Craig, gave a handle to the enemies of the Villiers family for accusations of the most horrible character against the Favourite and his mother. Buckingham's supreme power during the last year of King James's reign, and the disaster of the expedition to the Palatinate had raised up a host of enemies against him, and the popularity which he had gained after his return from Spain had rapidly given way to hatred and distrust, fomented by the Puritans, who detested the proposals for the French marriage. The behaviour, therefore, of Buckingham and his mother by the King's bedside, the bare facts of which were known only to a few, were twisted into a diabolical appearance of guilty practices. Dr. Craig, a man with a grievance, whispered dark things among his friends. Dr. Eglisham gave such a public expression to his suspicions that he had to fly from the country. At Brussels, he composed a definite accusation of murder against the Duke, and forwarded it to both Houses of Parliament, by whom it was, of course, contemptuously disregarded. But in a pamphlet, entitled "The Forerunner of Revenge," his accusations found a way to the English public, and bred a swarm of foul slanders against Buckingham and his family, mixed with much wordy abuse and many self-evident absurdities. The specific charge against the Favourite lies in the following narration :—

"The King being sick of a certain ague which in the spring was of itself never found deadly, the Duke took this opportunity, when all the doctors of physic were at dinner, upon the Monday before the King died, without their knowledge or consent, and offered him a white powder to take, the which he a long time refused ; but overcome with his flattering importunity, at length took it in wine, and immediately became worse and worse, falling into many swoonings and pains, and violent fluxes of the belly, so tormented that his Majesty cried out aloud of the white powder, 'Would to God I had never taken it! it will cost me my life.'

"In like manner also, the Countess of Buckingham, my Lord of Buckingham's mother, upon the Friday, the physicians being also absent and at dinner, and not made acquainted with her doings, applied a plaister to the King's heart and breast ; whereupon he grew faint and short-breathed, and in a great agony. Some of the physicians after dinner, returning to see the King,

by the offensive smell of the plaister, perceived something to be about him, hurtful to him, and searched what it should be, and found it out, and exclaimed that the King was poisoned. The Duke of Buckingham entering, commanded the physicians out of the room, caused one of them to be committed prisoner to his own chamber, and another to be removed from court ; quarrelled with others of the King's servants in his sick Majesty's own presence so far, that he offered to draw his sword against them in his Majesty's sight. And Buckingham's mother, kneeling down before his Majesty, cried out with a brazen face, 'Justice, justice, sir, I demand justice of your Majesty!' His Majesty asked her for what. 'For that which their lives are no ways sufficient to satisfy, for saying that my son and I have poisoned your Majesty.' 'Poisoned me?' said he ; with that turning himself, swooned, and she was removed.

"The Sunday after his Majesty died, Buckingham desired the physicians who attended his Majesty to sign with their own hands a writ of testimony, that the powder which he gave him was a good and safe medicine, which they refused.

"Immediately after his Majesty's death, the physician, who was commanded to his chamber, was set at liberty, with a caveat to hold his peace ; the others threatened, if they kept not good tongues in their heads."

Eglisam's hatred of Buckingham was so intense that he was not content with accusing him of the King's murder, but, with many gross and preposterous details, made out that he had poisoned the Marquis of Hamilton. He also refers in his pamphlet to a document, said to have been written by the Duke and found in the streets of London, giving a list of people who were to be "removed" by his favourite in the same devilish way. Eglisam himself was possibly the author of this forgery which was actually perpetrated, as we learn from Sir Henry Wotton.

"I had a commission laid upon me," he writes, "by sovereign command, to examine a lady about a certain filthy accusation, grounded upon nothing but a few names taken up by a footman in a kennel, and straight baptised. It was a list of each as the Duke had appointed to be poisoned at home, himself being then in Spain. I found it to be the most malicious and frantic surmise, and the most contrary to his nature, that I think had ever been brewed from the beginning of the world."

Dr. Eglisham was nothing but a vile blackmailer, as appears from the evidence of both Wotton and Sanderson, who state that this creature offered to publish a recantation of his slanders for a certain sum of money, an offer received by the Duke with indignation and disgust. But give a lie half an hour's start, and the truth will never overtake it. The charges first uttered by Craig and Eglisham were taken up by Coke, Wilson, Weldon, Sir Symonds d'Ewes, and other contemporary writers who repeat his horrible story with many contradictory variations which disprove any first-hand knowledge of the incidents connected with the King's death. The increasing dislike to Buckingham made even some honest men believe that there was, at least, some grain of truth in the charges against him.

Yet the slander was so absurd in regard to Buckingham that even passionate prejudice ought not to have given it a moment's credence. The whole character of the man, so open-hearted, so entirely lacking in gloomy, brooding thoughts, so quick to express every fleeting mood and fancy, made it impossible for him to have ever conceived such a crime. Then he had nothing to gain by the King's death. He had been master of the King's will, he was in all but name the sovereign power in the country, and though as it happened Charles, who succeeded, continued him in his position as favourite, there was no certainty beforehand that the Prince's cold, obstinate, jealous nature would be so favourable to Buckingham's ambitions as the affection of the doating old monarch.

We may dismiss every shadow of the slander as false and outrageous. James died from perfectly natural causes. "Certainly," says Bishop Goodman, "there never lived a better natured man than Buckingham was. Yet if it were fit for me to deliver mine own opinion, being the last man that did him [the King] homage in the time of his sickness, truly I think that King James every autumn did feed a little more than moderately upon fruits : he had his grapes, his nectarines, and other fruits in his own keeping ; besides we did see that he fed very plentifully on them from abroad. I remember that Mr. French of the Spicery, who sometimes did present him with his first strawberries, cherries, and other fruits, kneeling to the King, had some speech to use to him—that he did desire his Majesty to accept them, and that he was sorry they were not better—with

such-like complemental words ; but the King never had the patience to hear him one word, but his hand was in the basket. After his eating of fruit in the spring-time, his body fell into a great looseness, which although while he was young did tend to preserve his health, yet now being grown toward sixty, it did a little weaken his body, and going to Theobalds, to Newmarket, and stirring abroad when as the coldness of the year was not yet past almost, it could not be prevented but he must fall into a quartan ague."

This seems a reasonable explanation of the cause of the King's mortal illness, but, whether true or not, there is no excuse for a modern historian to adopt the black suspicions of the time with regard to the Duke of Buckingham, who afterwards "spake with tears in his eyes" when he recalled how much he had been beholden to the King for all favours to himself and his kindred. Buckingham's tears did not flow readily, but they came from a warm and generous heart.

CHAPTER IX

THE FRENCH MARRIAGE

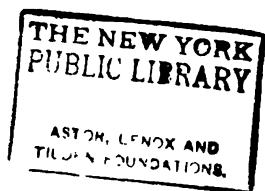
IF any of Buckingham's enemies believed that the death of his old master, James, would make a difference to his position in the kingdom, they were quickly disillusioned. While the body of the late King was awaiting burial, Buckingham slept in the new King's room, or quite close to him, and he was the first to be sworn a gentleman of the bed-chamber. A few days later, however, he was taken ill, and on the first of April had to be carried in his chair to his lodgings in Whitehall, where he stayed awhile, treating himself with physic. "He hath been lately much troubled with an impostume that brake in his head," wrote John Chamberlain to Sir Dudley Carleton, "and is yet somewhat crazy; but he continues in wonted favour and greatness."

His brother, Kit Villiers, the Earl of Anglesey, was not so fortunate in keeping his place, for the King refused to have him sworn of his bed-chamber, saying he would have no drunkards about his person.* King Charles made some other alterations of office, the Earl of Pembroke becoming Lord Steward, and his brother Montgomery Lord Chamberlain. A new man was appointed to the Privy Council—Sir Humphrey May, eager to serve the King and Buckingham in all their desires. He will be remembered by my readers as the man who went to the Earl of Somerset in George's early days at Court, with the attempt to reconcile the old favourite with the new. Sir Francis Cottington, who had been, it will be remembered, the private secretary of Charles as Prince of Wales, and one of his companions on the Spanish journey, was removed from his place, and forbidden to appear at Court. This was construed as a

* Rev. Joseph Mead wrote to Sir Martin Stuteville.—"Court and Times."



KING CHARLES I IN THREE POSITIONS
AFTER THE PAINTING BY VANDYCK AT WINDSOR



sign that Buckingham's influence with Charles was of the same character as his former hold over the late King, and that his personal interests, enmities, and friendships would be the dominant factors in the Court of King Charles. In this case, however, the truth is that the King had his own reasons to dislike Cottington. The secretary, having fallen ill in Madrid, had been received into the Catholic Church, a crime in the eyes of Charles, who now hated Catholicism because he hated Catholic Spain. But Cottington had also been heard to declare that the breaking of the Spanish treaties was not justified by political wisdom. That amounted to something like high treason. Cottington, like others, believed that his undoing was entirely due to Buckingham's enmity, and he made a frank endeavour to regain the Duke's favour. Drawing him on one side he asked "whether it could not be in his power, by all dutiful application and all possible service to be restored to the good opinion his Grace had once vouchsafed to have of him, and to be admitted to serve him?"

Buckingham was no less frank. Now, as always, he acted openly; in enmity, as he did in friendship. He told Cottington "that he would deal very clearly with him; that it was utterly impossible to bring to pass that which he had proposed; but that he was not only firmly resolved never to trust him, or to have to do with him, but that he was and would be always his declared enemy; and that he should do always whatsoever should be in his power to ruin and destroy him, and of this he might be assured."

Cottington, who was a man of business, decided to save as much as he could out of the ruin of his fortune, and knowing Buckingham's honesty, made an appeal to his sense of justice. He explained that he had spent a good deal of his own money in buying jewels and pictures to the Duke's commission, and that in hope of future favours he had given him a set of tapestries worth £800. He hoped, he said, that his Grace would not suffer himself to gain by his victim's loss. "Certainly not," said Buckingham, loftily. "Send in your account, and every penny shall be paid." *

A curious little anecdote, very characteristic of Buckingham, but also very significant of the new *régime* at Court, which would

* Clarendon, and others.

make it dangerous for any man to utter words which others might hear. The Court of Charles, from the very first day upon which he received the homage of his Lords, had a different atmosphere from what men had breathed under the first Stuart, and Charles had hardly a trait of his father's character. James, though sincere in his religious convictions, was morally lax, and his Court was a place of open debauchery. Charles, on the other hand was strict in his purity, and would not tolerate the noisy frolics and coarse buffooneries which James had enjoyed among his boys. But the old King had had the virtues of his vices (if one may invert a familiar French proverb). His easy good nature, which often led him into folly and favouritism, guarded him often from cruelty and injustice. Conscious, also, that the honours and riches which he lavished on such men as Somerset and Buckingham, and his host of minor favourites, were the reward, not of political ability, but of personal charms, he had, at least until his dotage, trusted to his own opinions and wisdom in his domestic and foreign policy (though his opinions veered as often as a weather-vane), exercising his sovereign authority and veto in all matters of importance. But Charles was unconscious of his own weakness. With a rather cold nature and narrow vision, he had fixed ideas which were more dangerous than his father's inconsistency. He was not governed by his affections, but by an intellect singularly lacking in imagination and breadth, and Buckingham was not so much his favourite as his Prime Minister, with infinitely more power, therefore, than when his position was subordinate to the moods and wishes of his old lord and master. Having gained the confidence of Charles, who believed in his political wisdom, there was no check upon his actions, for Charles had more than the obstinacy of his father, and none of that amiable and affectionate weakness which had made James so accessible to new impressions and so ready to give an ear to every adviser.

In spite, therefore, of the disasters to the English troops under Mansfeld, Buckingham was able to persist in his fatal foreign policy, with the King's full authority and assistance.

One army had been almost annihilated. Buckingham, with undaunted enthusiasm, prepared to raise another. As Lord Admiral he also pressed forward the preparations for the fitting out of an English fleet, consisting of twelve battleships, twenty

armed merchantmen, and fifty colliers for transport, at Portsmouth, and obtained the consent of the Privy Council to impress ten thousand citizens to go out with his fleet as soldiers. One may read such a sentence without a thrill, yet if one thinks a little the imagination may easily realize the horrid work of the press-gangs upon this gigantic task of capturing ten thousand "stout fellows" for foreign service of an unknown character, for what was going to be done with the fleet and army was unknown even to Buckingham himself. The pressed men he wished to exchange with the Dutch for English volunteers in the Netherlands, who had already been trained in war. But the objective of the fleet was quite undecided until the French Government declared its policy. If France would co-operate with this English force, a formal war might be declared against Spain, followed by victories glorious to Buckingham and England. But Louis and his minister, Richelieu, were still cautiously avoiding any contract in the nature of an offensive alliance.

So Buckingham decided upon a plan, which had already been half arranged, but postponed. Confident always of his personal influence (though it had failed so utterly in Spain), he decided to go over to France to fetch the young Princess, who was to be wedded to Charles by proxy on May 1st. While in Paris he would have an opportunity of using his powers of persuasion on the French King and his crafty minister.

During the last days of James, Buckingham had intended to cross over to France in order to be present at the marriage; and he had made elaborate preparations for a wardrobe worthy of such a ceremony. The list of his promised "wedding garments," and of his whole suite to accompany him, has been recorded, and may well be printed as an illustration of his prodigal magnificence, which Buckingham thought suitable to his high estate.

"My Lord Duke is intended to take his Journey towards Paris on Wednesday the 31st of March. His Grace hath for his body twenty-seven rich suits embroidered and lased with silk and silver plushes, besides one rich white satten uncut velvet suit, set all over both suite and cloak with diamonds; which suit His Grace intends to enter into Paris with. The other rich suit is of purple satin embroidered all over with rich

orient pearls; the cloak made after the Spanish fashion with all things suitable; the value whereof will be twenty thousand pounds; and this is thought shall be for the wedding day in Paris. His other suits are all rich as invention can frame, or art fashion. His colours for the Entrance are white and matchet, and for the Wedding crimson and gold.

Twenty Privie Gentlemen,	}	Three rich suits apiece.
Seven grooms of his Chamber,		
Thirty chief Yeomen,		
Two Master Cooks.		

Of his own servants for the Household—

Twenty-five second cooks :

Fourteen Yeomen of the second rank :

Seventeen grooms to them.

Forty-five labourers selletters belonging to the kitchen.

Twelve Pages : three rich suits apiece.

Twenty-four footmen : three rich suits and two rich coats apiece.

Twelve grooms : one suit apiece.

Six riders : one suit apiece.

Besides eight others, to attend the stable business.

Three rich velvet coaches inside, without with gold lace all over. Eight horses in each Coach, and six coachmen richly suited. Eight score musicians richly suited. Twenty-two watermen, suited in sky coloured taffaty all gilded with anchorage and my lord's arms; all these to row in one barge of my lord's. All these servants have everything suitable, all being [at] his Grace's charge.

Lords already knowne to go.

Marques Hambleton.

Earl Dorset.

„ Denbigh.

„ Montgomery.

„ Warwick.

„ Anglesey.

„ Salisbury.

Lord Walden.

Mr. Villars.

Mr. Edw. Howard.

Lo. President's two sons.

Mr. Wm. Segar.

Mr. Francis Anslove.

Mr. Edw. Goring.

Mr. Walter Steward.

Besides twenty-four Knights of great worth, all which will carry six or seven pages apiece, or as many footmen. The whole train will be six or seven hundred persons at least. When the list is perfect, there will appear many more than I have named." *

All this anticipated splendour was countermanded on account of the King's illness and death, the marriage itself being postponed. But now, in desperate anxiety to effect a military alliance with France, Buckingham urged Charles to conclude the marriage by proxy, and, in all haste, he made arrangements to bring back the bride. From a letter to the Rev. Joseph Mead, of April 27, 1625, we find that "the Duke's servants are gone towards France, with fifty geldings and nags, and twelve coach horses," but as soon as poor old James had been buried with solemn pomp, Buckingham hurried away without his full wardrobe, accompanied only by the Earl of Montgomery, Secretary Morton, Sir George Goring, Sir Thomas Badger, and Wat Montague. In the meanwhile Henrietta Maria, sister of King Louis XIII., had been duly married on a stage outside the west door of Notre Dame, according to the ancient rites of France, the Duc de Chevreuse, who was "pro-Anglican" in his sympathies, standing as the proxy of King Charles.

Buckingham arrived in Paris on May 14th, and the Parisians were all agog to catch a sight of this great Englishman, whose magnificence appealed to their imagination, as the memory of it still lives in France, in the immortal novel of Dumas. He was received with the utmost ceremony and courtesy by the French Court. "He appeared," says Lord Clarendon, "with all the lustre the wealth of England could adorn him with, and outshined all the bravery that Court could dress in, and overacted the whole nation in their most peculiar vanities." He was soon close in council with King Louis and Richelieu. Of what actually passed during those secret conferences we know very little. But it is certain that Louis refused to bind himself in any way either to make war with

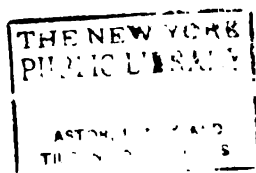
* Harleian MSS. Reprinted in Ellis's Letters.

Spain, or to reject overtures of peace, nor would he pledge himself to co-operate with his full force for the recovery of the Palatinate. All that he would promise was to reinforce Mansfeld's broken army by two thousand French cavalry, and he was inclined under certain conditions to make peace with the Protestants of Rochelle, who were in mutiny against their King and country. This latest concession was very ardently desired by King Charles and Buckingham, because, if they entered into an offensive and defensive alliance with France, it might possibly happen that English ships and Protestant seamen would have to be employed against the Rochellois—to the great scandal of the English people. Buckingham, however, had come with much greater hopes, and the disappointment of his personal embassy was bitter and disheartening. Perhaps it made him a little mad. Perhaps some touch of that "craziness" from which, according to John Chamberlain, he had recently been suffering, still affected his brain. Perhaps, on the other hand, there was beneath an extraordinary adventure into which he now plunged, some wild political strategy or hope of revenge; or was it that this man, with the good and beautiful wife at home, was seized with a sudden uncontrollable passion for a woman in whose eyes he read some secret message or a secret yearning? We can hardly guess at the psychology of the mood which now seems to have mastered him, but certain it is that Buckingham, who had come to fetch the wife of his own King, allowed himself to make violent protestations of love to the wife of the King of France.

Anne of Austria, acknowledged as one of the fairest ladies in Europe, was at this time a neglected wife, and, like many such women, yearned, perhaps, for a romance which would ease the pain, and solace the loneliness, of her poor passionate heart. Buckingham, in his splendour, so superb in presence and in manner, gracious, persuasive, and fascinating to all women, and naturally anxious upon his arrival at the Court of Louis to obtain the favour of the French Queen, must have seemed to her one of those chivalrous, heroic beings pictured in the imagination of the troubadours and the writers of romance. By some word or glance she must have betrayed her secret to the man who had some skill in reading women's eyes, and he, excited by the danger of her high position, stirred by the



ANNE OF AUSTRIA, CONSORT OF LOUIS XIII
FROM A MINIATURE AT SOUTH KENSINGTON MUSEUM



adventurous thrill of such an amour, foreseeing in it, perhaps, some means of gaining a hold upon the French King, forgot his faithful Duchess, and his own faith, and with all the arts of gallantry, in which, if we may believe his contemporaries, he was a past-master, stretched out his hands for the Queen's heart. Madame de Motteville, who was her closest friend, confesses in her "Memoirs" that the Queen was much touched by the Duke's personality, and declared that he was the only one bold enough to lay siege to her heart. "He was well made, with a handsome face; he had a great soul, he was magnificent, lavish, and the favourite of a great King. He had all the King's treasures at his disposal, and all the jewels of the English crown to adorn himself. It is not astonishing that with so many charming qualities he should have had such high ambitions, such exalted but dangerous and blameworthy desires."

Madame de Motteville relates a curious scene in which Buckingham expressed his passion. The Queen was walking with the Duke in a garden, followed at a discreet distance by a numerous suite. Talking together, and closely attended only by the Queen's squire, Putange, they came to a turn in the path where a fence hid them from the public eye. The squire, perceiving that Buckingham desired to say something privately to the Queen, and like a gallant young Frenchman anxious not to intrude upon what was evidently a tender *illico-d-illico*, took occasion to lag behind. What exactly happened is unknown. It seems, however, that Buckingham spoke so passionately and wildly that the Queen was frightened, and suddenly cried out, and immediately the squire ran up, and his mistress scolded him for having left her, her agitation and her cry revealing to everybody that something unusual had taken place. The news could not be kept from the King, and it is certain that from this time he regarded Buckingham with the deepest suspicion and dislike. Outwardly, however, all was well, and Henrietta Maria, the English Queen as she was now called, was escorted to Amiens by Marie de Medicis the Queen-Mother, Anne of Austria herself, and a great cavalcade of some four thousand French nobles and ladies. Rich presents were lavished on the English ambassadors and gentlemen. "The Duke of Buckingham," says Chamberlain, in one of his letters, "himself wrote to

the King that he had already to the value of 80,000 crowns; the Earl of Carlisle 22,000 crowns, the Earl of Holland to 2000 crowns, Secretary Morton to £200; Sir George Goring had a diamond from the King of £1000, from the Queen-Mother one of £300, and curious plate to the value of £1200; as likewise Sir Francis Nethersole the same quantity of plate." Buckingham with his suite now took possession of their sovereign's young wife, and said farewell to the French train. We may judge of the Duke's state of mind by another incident narrated by Madame de Motteville, who was told by the Queen herself. Buckingham came and kissed her dress as she sat in a coach with the Princesse de Conti by her side. He hid himself behind the curtain, as though to say a few words, "but much more to wipe away the tears which at that moment fell from his eyes."

But more extraordinary behaviour was to follow. Buckingham arrived nearly as far as Calais with Henrietta's retinue, when he was met by a courier from England carrying certain instructions regarding his negotiations with the French King. They seem to have been of an important character, but Buckingham seized the excuse to ride back to Amiens. Having delivered a message to the Queen-Mother, on the subject of his despatches, he requested an audience of the young Queen. Readers unfrequented with the manners of the French Court at that time, and much later, will be rather shocked to hear that he was received at her bedside, but this was the customary etiquette of Royalty, and the word *levée*, still in use, owes its origin to that habit. But, in this case, the only person in attendance on the Queen was the Comtesse de Lannoi, her lady of honour, described as "prudent, virtuous, and elderly." Buckingham's behaviour, too, was not merely the gallant homage due to a Royal lady of France. Throwing himself upon his knees at her bedside, he kissed the coverlet with such extraordinary transports that, says Madame de Motteville, "it was easy to see that his passion was violent and of a kind that does not leave the use of reason to those attacked by it."

The Queen admitted afterwards that she was very much embarrassed, as well as somewhat annoyed, so that for a long time she stayed without saying a word. But the old Countess, not at all wishing that the Duke should continue in his

madness, told him "very severely" that this was not the custom in France, and begged him to rise. But Buckingham, quite unabashed, argued the point, and swore that as he was not a Frenchman he need not observe all the laws of the Constitution. Then turning again to the Queen, he spoke, quite loudly, "the most tender things in the world." By this time the Queen had recovered her senses, and, afraid of being compromised by such a scene, complained repeatedly of his boldness, and as Madame de Motteville slyly remarks, "without perhaps being too angry," ordered him to get off his knees and go away. Buckingham was at last prevailed on to do so. But he stayed a night at Amiens, and the next day the Queen showed that she was really not very angry with him by receiving him in the presence of the whole Court. Buckingham then took his leave, but he left behind him at the Court two friends who were secretly instructed to serve his interests with the Queen and to keep his memory green. One was Henry Rich, Lord of Holland, who delighted in such services, the other Balthazar Gerbier, an artist, who was in Buckingham's employment and his most faithful slave and flatterer.

It is impossible to know how far the French Queen reciprocated the passion of her lover. It is possible, as Madame de Motteville makes out, that, brought up in an atmosphere of gallantry, she kept a pure heart, and saw nothing more than a romantic and innocent attachment in her relations with the English Duke. But however that may be, she was certainly guilty of most dangerous indiscretion. According to Roger Coke, she found means to send through Balthazar Gerbier, though he was under the continual espionage of Richelieu's agents, a valuable jewel, and, what was more suggestive of intimate love, her own garter. Nor did she attempt to contradict, but seemed rather to find a sweet flattery in the popular reports of her love for the English Duke. There is an anecdote told of how she happened to meet one day the poet Voiture, and upon inquiring his thoughts he spoke the following verses, instantly improvised :—

"Je pensois (car nous autres poètes
Nous pensons extravagament)
Ce que, dans l'humeur où vous êtes,
Vous feriez, si dans ce moment

Vous aviez en cette place,
Venir le Duc de Buckingham
Et lequel seroit en disgrâce
De lui ou du Père Vincent."*

Some time afterwards Buckingham desired to return to France in order that he might again see the fair young Queen, but he was given to understand very explicitly that King Louis would by no means permit him on French soil. It was probably at this time that he received a curious letter, partly written in cipher, from Henry Rich, Earl of Holland. "Do as you will," he writes. "I dare not advise you ; to come is dangerous, not to come is unfortunate."

Going back now to the journey of Henrietta Maria to England, it is clear that Buckingham was not with the suite which took her to Dover, where Charles had been waiting impatiently for her arrival. Some weeks before, the ladies of the Court who had been chosen to attend upon the new Queen, had travelled with great encumbrances of baggage, and coaches furnished with six horses ("which comes altogether now in fashion, a vanity of excessive charge and of little use") says Chamberlain, with many servants to the coast, but the ladies of the Villiers family, all but Kate Buckingham, who seemed always to have been the patient housewife, went across the Channel to Boulogne. There were the Countesses of Buckingham, Denbigh, and Anglesey, who were accompanied by the young Marquis of Hamilton. Charles had been earnestly recommended by his mother-in-law, the Queen-Mother of France, not to meet Henrietta immediately upon her arrival at Dover, in order that she might have time to recover from sea-sickness and to regain her good looks. Charles, however, wishing to play the part of an eager lover, rode over from Canterbury the morning after the English ships had put into port. The little Queen was not ready for him, but as soon as she heard of his coming she hastened down a pair of stairs to meet him, and with pretty humility offered to kneel down and kiss his hand. But he lifted her up in his arms, and kissed her with many kisses. Then in French she spoke her first words to her husband :

"Sire, je suis venue en ce pays pour votre majesté pour estre usée et commandée de vous."

* The Queen's confessor.

Then she noticed that Charles glanced down to her feet to see whether she wore high shoes. He had heard so much of her tiny stature that he was surprised to find that she reached as high as his shoulders. With quick wit she answered his unspoken thought.

"Sire, I stand upon my own feet ; I have no helps by art. Thus high am I, and am neither higher nor lower."

The young Queen had come with a train of priests, waiting-women, and servants, all of whom she introduced by name to her husband, who received them with a cold courtesy. But on the first day of marriage, nothing jarred upon the general happiness, and the King and Queen were eager to be affectionate and merry. At dinner the King carved up pheasant and venison, and the young wife, strict Catholic as she was, thought well to disregard the reminder from her confessor that it was a fast day, and ate heartily of the good meats.

"The same night, having supped at Canterbury, her majesty went to bed, and some time after his majesty followed her ; but having entered his bed-chamber, the first thing he did, he bolted all the doors round about, being seven, with his own hand, letting in but two of his bed-chamber to undress him ; which being done, he bolted them out also. The next morning, he lay till seven o'clock, and was pleasant with the lords that he had beguiled them, and ever since hath been very jocund." He had defended himself from those merry but wanton marriage customs which, by being traditional in England, were allowed to disturb the wedding night.

Upon the journey to London the young Queen was received with great enthusiasm by the English people, and between Gravesend and Whitehall, she was able to see part of the fleet which was being fitted out for active service, a volley of fifteen hundred great shot thundering a welcome at her. At Whitehall the Court made merry with masques and banquets, and Buckingham, who was now at York House, entertained their majesties with such magnificence and prodigal expense that even the famous banquets of Hay, Earl of Carlisle, were far outshone.

John Chamberlain, describing one of these banquets at Buckingham's house, says that "One rare dish came by mere chance : a sturgeon, full six feet long, that afternoon leaping

into a sculler's boat not far from the place, was served in at supper." Then he goes on bitterly : "In all these shows and feastings there hath been such excessive bravery on all sides, as bred rather a surfeit than any delight in them that saw it. And it were more fit, and would have become us to compare and dispute with such pompous kind of people [the French] in iron and steel, than in gold and jewels, wherein we come not near them."

It was only for a few days at most that the Royal honeymoon was undimmed by passing shadows. Then there were unpleasant little incidents which tried the temper of both the King and Queen, and led to such strained relations between them for a time that it seemed as if the marriage would end in tragedy. The Queen was a devout Catholic, and a high-spirited young woman, who was not at all inclined to yield any of the privileges and liberties of faith which had been granted to her by the treaty. She had come to England believing that, according to the promises formally made, the English Catholics would no longer be penalized, and that the Catholic priests and attendants of her own household would have perfect freedom and respectful treatment. But the disappointing issue of the negotiations with the French Government had not made either Charles or Buckingham eager to fulfil their side of the contract, and to the Queen's astonishment and indignation, Catholics were still being dealt with severely. On the other hand, Charles, who had become rigidly convinced of the righteousness of the Anglican Church, was continually irritated by the presence of the priests who surrounded his wife, and who tactlessly adopted a hostile and aggressive attitude. There was, indeed, a lack of conciliation and toleration on both sides. At the very first Mass said before the Queen in London, the King gave orders that none of his Court should be present. Afterwards all the Protestants who attended on the Queen were dismissed by her Chamberlain, and the King retaliated by forbidding any English Catholics to serve her. This did not improve her Majesty's temper, which was soon found to be easily roused, in spite of her humility and graciousness upon first coming to England. One Mr. Mordaunt wrote to the Rev. Joseph Mead (whose letters were full of such anecdotes), that "The Queen, howsoever little of stature, is of spirit and vigour,

and seems of a more than ordinary resolution. With one frown, divers of us being at Whitehall to see her, being at dinner, and the room somewhat overheated with the fire and company, she drove us all out of the chamber. I suppose none but a Queen could have cast such a scowl."

Another story in the clergyman's correspondence shows the disagreeable antagonism existing between the Catholic and Protestant clergy at Court, who seem to have done their best, or worst, to cause a breach between the King and Queen. Their Majesties were dining together in state, and Mr. Hacket, chaplain to the Lord Keeper Williams, began to say grace, when the Queen's confessor would have prevented him, "but that Hacket shoved him away," whereupon "the confessor went to the Queen's side, and was about to say grace again, but that the King, pulling the dishes unto him, and the carvers falling to their business, hindered. When the dinner was done, he thought, standing by the Queen, to have been before Mr. Hacket; but Mr. Hacket again got the start. The confessor, nevertheless, begins his grace as loud as Mr. Hacket, with such a confusion that the King in a great passion instantly rose from the table, and taking the Queen by the hand, retired into the bed-chamber. Was not this a priestly discretion?"

In addition to these religious differences which inevitably created a barrier between husband and wife, Charles, who was of a jealous and sensitive nature, felt himself humiliated and insulted by the confidence which the Queen put in her own clergy, and the familiarity she allowed them. It was not an unusual thing for the King to find his wife's bed-chamber thronged by priests, and, although there was no suggestion of impropriety, the bedroom being, as already explained, the recognized apartment for the morning reception, yet Charles naturally resented this intrusion of foreigners, with whom he had no sympathy, and whom he believed were so many spies and mischief-makers, into the privacy of the Queen's apartments.

A smouldering hatred for the French began to take possession of his heart, and there is reason to believe that Buckingham helped to increase this exasperation. The Duke was certainly not on good terms with the Queen in these early days; knowing of his passionate behaviour towards her brother's wife, she probably feared and mistrusted him. On his side, finding that this

marriage, which he had advanced only as a means of furthering his foreign policy, had not resulted in any close and binding treaty with France, he was prejudiced against the girl-queen whom he had hoped to use as a pawn in the deadly game of international politics.

Madame de Motteville declared that she heard from Queen Henrietta Maria's own lips in after-days, when the widow of Charles, King and Martyr, was an exile in France, that Buckingham had fomented the quarrels between Charles and herself at the beginning of their married life, and had told her quite frankly that he would cause strife between them. Madam's word is not to be taken, perhaps, *au pied de la lettre*, but there is evidence that the Duke acted on behalf of the King, when later Charles exerted his authority as a husband at the expense of his promises as a lover.

CHAPTER X

THE EARLY DAYS OF CHARLES I

CHARLES now had to face his first Parliament, and Buckingham had to stand by his side as the responsible minister of his policy and actions. It was not a pleasant task for either of them. Charles had no love for Parliaments, but he was in desperate need of money, and conciliation was the only means of obtaining subsidies from a House of Commons which, with the beginning of a new reign, was animated by a new spirit. Voices were now heard of men who had come as the representatives of a people determined to remedy old abuses, and to control the destinies of the nation, men moved by a proud spirit of independence, and of determination to stand by their privileges and liberties, men of stern Puritan instinct, and men who, having nothing in common with the Puritans save in fanatical hatred of Catholicism, were inspired by revolutionary and democratic ideals. Pym was there, hard-headed, watchful, and with the courage of a bull-dog ; and Sir John Eliot, formerly a friend of Buckingham, and still not an enemy, but a democrat and an individualist, believing not in the divine right of kings, but in the divinity of man, and a staunch champion of Parliamentary government as representative of the people's will. Sir Francis Seymour, the hater of Spain and "the Papacy" ; Glanville, the man of precedents ; Phelips, the bold advocate of retrenchment and reform ; Sir Thomas Wentworth (not yet Lord Strafford, "the Thorough"), contemptuous of formality and red tape, but ardent in his desire for national efficiency under strong and resolute government ;—such men as these demanded, in no uncertain way, to know the King's purpose and policy at the commencement of his reign. The King's purpose was to obtain money—a great deal of money ; his policy was so vague and

undetermined, and was already discounted by such disasters and disappointments, that he could not reveal it to his Commons with any hope of arousing their confidence and enthusiasm. He reminded them of their eagerness to break the treaties of Spain, and of the engagements with other foreign powers into which his father had entered by their advice. With regard to the continental war to which he now stood pledged on behalf of the Palatinate, he asked them to reflect "what a great dishonour it were both to you and to me if this action so begun should fail for that assistance you are able to give me."

But the Commons had lost their enthusiasm for the war in Germany. The disasters of the English troops under Mansfeld could not be forgotten nor forgiven. The leniency shown to Catholics at home made them doubt the sincerity of the Protestant crusade, and some of them smelt papist plots at every street corner. So the first Parliament of Charles uttered speeches which to him seemed nothing less than treasonable, and the subsidy of £140,000, which after long discussion they finally granted, was infinitely less than he needed, and had confidently demanded.

Buckingham, upon whose shoulders rested the responsibility of the war, saw himself condemned by this inadequate vote to a restricted action which would result in new disaster. He had entered into heavy financial engagements with both France and Denmark for the co-operation of their armies against Austria and Spain. He had raised another army at home, and had equipped a fleet, both of which must be disbanded and dispersed if money was not found to pay men's wages. He had already spent large sums of his private fortune* in his country's cause, and that the representatives of the nation should now abandon the policy which they had advocated during the reign of James seemed to him black ingratitude, and a base betrayal of England's honour.

With bold ingenuity he endeavoured to persuade them into the granting of further subsidies by something like a *coup d'état*. A plague was raging in London, and people were reckoning up the death bills with shuddering fear as they mounted higher week by week. Even members of Parliament were willing to cut short their speeches for the sake of an earlier dissolution.

* Rushworth.

By July numbers of them had already been scared away into the country, and only a few remained to take part in the debates. The King himself had hastily returned to Hampton Court upon hearing that the foul disease had invaded his own palace of Whitehall.

Buckingham thought he saw an opportunity. Hastily summoning his own followers in the House, he told them that he intended to put up a member to demand additional subsidies before the session closed. It was a dangerous game, and even his friends shirked this attempt to "jump" a diminished assembly into granting large sums of public money. Sir Humphrey May, who had been appointed to the Privy Council by Buckingham, was so alarmed at the probable results of such an action that he approached Eliot, as being independent, and yet not an acknowledged enemy of the Duke's, to remonstrate with him.

Eliot accepted the commission. Presenting himself at York House, he arrived when the Duke and his lady were in bed. But upon sending a message as to the urgency of his business, the Duchess rose and withdrew to her cabinet, upon which he was admitted at once. Eliot proceeded plainly and without a waste of words, and declared that to force such a motion upon the House of Commons at a time when so many members had gone away, would be "an ambuscade and a surprise." Whatever the result, it would not be to the honour of the King, nor honourable towards his subjects.

Buckingham was not in a yielding mood. We can imagine him impatiently plucking the sheets as he lay in his great four-poster, and propping himself on an elbow on his embroidered pillow, as he answered the objectionable arguments. The King's honour, he said, rested upon the fleet, which would be ruined if money were not forthcoming. If the Commons were absent from their places, it was their own fault.

So the two men, who had at one time been close friends, argued one against the other, and, as in many arguments, each was convinced of his righteousness. So the conference ended in mere words.

Buckingham carried out his intention, and one of his most trusted subordinates in the Admiralty—Sir John Coke—rose in his place to make the demand for the subsidies. To the

astonished members sitting in a desert of nearly empty benches, he let a very big black cat out of the bag. £293,000, he said, would be needed for the fleet in preparation ; and to support the armies of our allies, Mansfeld—and the King of Denmark, £270,000 would be needed annually for each. After a wordy defence of his policy and an appeal for Parliamentary aid, he ended by the sonorous statement that “even the establishment of his Majesty on his royal throne, the peace of Christendom, the state of religion, depend upon the fleet.”

All such words were hardly heard. But only the astounding figures seemed to stare the members in the face in blood-red letters. They were scared and silent. They would neither support nor oppose Sir John Coke's appeal, and he, equally startled by the effect of his words, and by this ominous amazement expressed on the faces before him, sat down after a few vague words of patriotic eloquence, meaning nothing. No vote was taken, and no subsidy passed. Buckingham's daring coup had failed, and a few days later the House was prorogued until August 1st at Oxford.

During the interval, Buckingham was realizing only too painfully the difficulty of carrying out a war policy with an ally so selfish and astute as the French Government under the rule of Richelieu ; and he was now faced with an engagement which was exceedingly dangerous to his reputation. At the end of the last reign, while the French treaty was in progress, James, with the advice of Buckingham and his Privy Council, agreed to lend a number of ships to the French Government to be employed against Genoa, France being at war with Italy. The fulfilment of this pledge was now demanded by Louis, but it was obviously intended to use them against the Protestant rebels of Rochelle. Buckingham postponed sending the vessels as long as he dared without risking the alliance, but at length despatched the *Vanguard*, of the Royal Navy, with seven great merchant ships under the command of Captain John Pennington, who was, however, secretly instructed not to hand them over to the French if he could by any convenient excuse, even to the extent of inciting a mutiny among his men, avoid this action. The English seamen hardly needed an encouragement to rebel. When they learnt that they were called upon to proceed against Rochelle, they broke out into a great tumult, and, swearing that

they would rather be hanged than surrender the ships or fight against their fellow-Protestants, they raised anchor and set sail again for the English Channel.* The Marquis de Rohan then sent ambassadors from Rochelle to beseech Charles not to lend the ships for service against them, and received favourable replies. But Charles and Buckingham were conducting secret correspondence with France of a critical character, and being given to believe that the French King had decided to effect a truce with the rebellious Rochellois, gave their conscience a rest, and sent new instructions to Pennington to return immediately with the *Vanguard* and the merchant ships, and to place them unreservedly at the disposal of the French ministers. Pennington obeyed his instructions, and sailed for Dieppe, but to a man the captains, masters, and crews of the vessels declined to serve under the French flag, and with the exception of one gunner, who was disabled by an explosion, left their ships. Pennington returned with the news to Buckingham when the English Parliament had reassembled at Oxford, the plague still continuing in London. But although he went into hiding, so it was rumoured, until the Parliament had dissolved, the story reached them from other sources, and so exasperated the Commons against the Duke, that they questioned his conduct and honour, and the whole course of his foreign policy, with a boldness of language that was exceedingly ominous and threatening. They asked some very pertinent questions. By what Council was the war designed? Who and where was the enemy? Were the ships employed against Rochelle paid for by Parliamentary subsidies? Did not the Duke, in breaking the match with Spain, make a worse match with France?

Buckingham condescended to answer these questions, but in a vague and careless manner, which did not at all satisfy his opponents. The war policy, he said, was initiated and designed by a council consisting of "such worthy persons" as Lord Conway, Lord Chichester, Lord Grandison, Sir Robert Mansel, and Sir John Cook. As for the enemy, "make the fleet ready to go out" [by granting a further subsidy], "and the King bids you name the Enemy yourselves; put the Sword into his majesty's hands, and he will improve it to your honour." To the third question he answered that the ships were paid for by the

* Rushworth.

French King, and "it is not always fit for Kings to give an account of their counsels ; judge the King by the event. As regards the French match being worse than the Spanish, I hope," he said, "that the contrary will appear," showing after this extraordinary oration, which was not so much a defence as a defiance of the right of the Commons to call in question the policy of the King and his ministers. Parliament was dissolved, still without an additional war subsidy having been granted. Charles was now in desperate need of money to carry out the Duke's scheme, and the comptroller of the household was ordered to issue letters under the Privy Seal to obtain forced loans from private individuals for the public service. At the same time Buckingham, at enormous expense which still further drained the Treasury, kept the fleet ready for action, though he was still undecided as to its objective.

At a Council of War, Lisbon and Cadiz were discussed as the most effective points of attack, but it was resolved to leave the decision to the "Generalissimo," or, as he would be called, the Admiral of the Fleet. Buckingham had intended to take command himself, but a project was now on foot for him to go to the Hague to form a closer alliance with the Dutch Netherlands. It was, therefore, decided to give the command of the fleet to one of his favourites, Sir Edward Cecil, who was raised to the rank of Viscount Wimbledon, with the Earl of Essex as vice-admiral. Cecil was a brave man, not without ability as a soldier, but utterly without experience at sea. Essex was also a gallant soldier, and as the son of Elizabeth's Essex, had inherited great traditions, but he was no more at home on the sea than Cecil himself. Even with good ships, and good fighting men under their command, it is doubtful whether great deeds would have been done ; but the ships were ill equipped, and the men "land-lubbers" pressed into the navy against their will, and of low character. Nor were the junior officers of the fleet remarkable for ability. Picked by Buckingham because they were his flatterers, or the friends of his flatterers, they were so obviously inefficient and inexperienced that Cecil himself protested that he dared not trust them.

Nevertheless, in September of 1625, the King and Buckingham went down in high spirits to the port to review the fleet which, with resolute optimism, they both believed would bring

glory to the English nation and silence the scoffers and slanderers who were murmuring against the war. They were, indeed, murmuring somewhat loudly at the time against Buckingham himself, and his withdrawal from the personal command of the fleet was a fresh cause of complaint.

Lord Cromwell, who was always plain-spoken, took it upon himself to bring to the Duke's ears the echoes of the public opinion in a very candid letter.

"Much discourse there is of your Lordship here and there," he wrote, "as I passed home and back. . . . All men say if you go not with the Fleet you shall suffer in it, because, if it prosper, it will be thought no act of yours, and if it succeed ill they say it might have been better had not you guided the King. They say your undertakings in the kingdom will much prejudice your Grace."

Early in October the fleet, consisting of eighty sail, great and small, with Viscount Wimbledon on the *Crown-Royal*, and Lord Essex on the *Swiftsure*, left Plymouth, and made for the Spanish coast. Essex, the leader, or Cecil (as he is more familiarly known), calling a council on his flagship, determined to strike at Cadiz by landing in a small bay between that town and San Lucar. But whatever plans he made were frustrated by the inefficiency, cowardice, and insubordination of his men. The ships were insufficiently victualled, and what food they had was bad. Half starving, therefore, they broke into open mutiny, and would not follow Essex, who made a dash for Cadiz Bay in the *Swiftsure* with Willoughby, who implored them to maintain the honour of their country. Later on they got out the wine-casks at a little place called Fort Puntal, and wild orgies took place among the famished men. It was impossible for Cecil and Essex to undertake the bombardment of Cadiz with such a fleet, and they now decided to put to sea again with the hope of capturing the Spanish plate-ship expected from Mexico. Memories of the famous exploits of Drake no doubt inspired this plan, and Cecil hoped, by bringing back this rich prize, to redeem, to some extent, the frightful disaster and dishonour of his expedition. But he was no Drake, and the Spanish merchantmen had grown wary. They slipped past the English fleet into the safe shelter of Cadiz harbour, and, after vainly watching for them, Cecil, with despair in his heart, hoisted the

signal for home. It was a deplorable home-coming. Battered by storms, rotting with old age, with foul hulls, broken spars, and tattered sails, with stinking food on board, and disease rife among his men, the ships straggled in one by one to any port they could make, and Buckingham in England learned that another of his great hopes had been shattered.

It was a terrible blow to him, and gave his enemies cause to attack his reputation with increased hostility. Yet he could admit no fault in himself, and indeed one may find excuses for him. That the spirit of Drake and Raleigh and Hawkins had died with them was not a guiltiness in him. That the men were cowardly and mutinous was not to his dishonour. He was not to blame because the Mexican fleet had slipped by in safety. So he argued, and we may allow him the cold comfort. Yet there were many things for which he must be blamed. As Lord Admiral of England, the condition of his fleet was a disgrace. It was his responsibility that the victuals were rotten, though crime was done by villainous contractors. His appointment of the commanding officers had been wanting in judgment. These things cannot be condoned by his biographer, and they were not overlooked by his contemporaries.

While the English fleet had been causing its own ruin, many important things had been happening in England, and Buckingham had been expending an enormous amount of energy in new diplomatic schemes, with high hopes of victorious news from the Lords Wimbledon and Essex. As already mentioned, he had agreed with Charles to cross over to Holland for the purpose of forming a strong Protestant alliance with the Dutch Netherlands and with Denmark and Sweden. It was a sound policy. The ambassadors of the United Provinces, who owed a great debt to English volunteers, were not loth to enter into a league with us against Austria and Spain, and both the King of Denmark and Gustavus of Sweden were anxious for English aid. Their interests were bound up with ours. They were indeed our natural allies, and if James and Charles had from the beginning sought an alliance and a wife in this direction, instead of entering into worthless and dishonourable treaties with nations opposed in politics and faith to our own, many disasters would have been avoided. But Buckingham had another hope which was founded on false reckoning. He believed that, in spite of

the increasingly strained relations between England and France, his personal influence at the Court of Louis would be sufficient to effect a reconciliation, and that, as the leader of a great Protestant federation of nations, he could induce Louis to join in a combined attack upon Spain and her allies, in order to avoid the danger of complete isolation in Europe. He did not take into account the fidelity of France to the Catholic faith, nor the possibility that for the sake of their faith and its security in Europe, France and Spain might settle their political differences and enter into a defensive alliance against the new Protestant confederacy. Buckingham also forgot, strangely enough, the unpardonable insult he had given to Louis in his mad amour with the French Queen. As soon as Louis heard that the Duke proposed to cross over to Paris after his visit to the Hague, he sent word by Blainville, a new ambassador then starting for England, that he would not permit Buckingham to enter his kingdom. Blainville, upon his arrival in London, does not seem to have delivered this message so bluntly as it was given, but he gave the Duke to understand that his proposal for the King of France to enter a Protestant federation was certain to be rejected. Louis was, however, prepared to support Mansfeld's army and the King of Denmark with money and arms, provided Charles kept his pledges to allow liberty to the English Catholics. Buckingham was more inclined than Charles to enter into friendly discussions with the French ambassador. The King was in a state of prickly heat against France and the French, chiefly owing to the troubles of his domestic life. Henrietta Maria, disappointed by her husband's broken promises towards the Catholics in England, and by his constantly expressed annoyance towards her French household, had entrenched herself behind her clergy and attendants, and was by no means the loving and dutiful wife which Charles had expected. He threatened to pack all her people back to France, and was excessively annoyed with the new ambassador for taking the Queen's part in these domestic differences.

Buckingham, however, with his usual optimism, faced all these troubles with equanimity, and prepared for his mission to the Hague. Before going, he executed vengeance upon one of those men whom he had raised to favour, and now accused of ingratitude and disloyalty. This was none other than the Lord

Keeper Williams, the astute, worldly minded, but common-sense clergyman who had helped to smooth over the difficulties of his marriage, whose advice over the patents and monopolies had rescued Buckingham from imminent danger, and who, as a counsellor, had been constantly prudent and zealous in the service of James and his Favourite. To Charles, who was becoming closely under the influence of Laud and his Anglican doctrines, Williams, with his broad and easy views of theology, was not congenial. And both the King and Buckingham were deeply incensed by the openly expressed objections of the Lord Keeper to the war policy which had exhausted the Treasury and lost the confidence of Parliament and the people.

The Great Seal had been placed in his hands by James on a three years' probation, and, as this term of office had now expired, Charles used this opportunity to dismiss him. Though Williams had incautiously boasted that he could stand upon his own legs without the assistance of Buckingham, now, in the hour of his disgrace, he turned to the Duke with a piteous appeal for mercy. But he sued to Buckingham in vain, and the Great Seal passed to Thomas Coventry, the Attorney-General, whose strong Protestantism and hatred of Spain were agreeable at that time to the temper of the King and the Duke. It was another proof that no man might speak against Buckingham with impunity. "The Duke's power with the King," wrote a correspondent to Wentworth, "for certain is exceeding great, and whom he will advance shall be advanced, and whom he doth but frown upon must be thrown down."

With this matter settled, and with Coventry using his new office to enforce the penal laws against the English Catholics with unusual severity, Buckingham set out for the Hague with the Earl of Holland as his companion and joint-ambassador. A storm scattered the ships acting as a convoy to the Lord Admiral, but after a dangerous passage the two ambassadors came safely to land. Buckingham's magnificence, as usual, dazzled the eyes of the people, but the congress of ambassadors representing the Dutch Republic, Denmark, and Sweden, which he expected to meet him, did not assemble in full strength. The Swedish ambassador had just died, the Prince of Orange held aloof, and the Danish ministers were the chief members present at the sittings. They had but one purpose, to extract

money from England in order to carry on the war against Austria; and although Buckingham had come with the intention of reducing the original offer of £30,000 a month as the price of the alliance, he now found it necessary to pledge himself to that enormous sum, in order to prevent Denmark from yielding to the Austrians through pressure of poverty. He had still heard no news from Cadiz, and he had golden visions of captured Spanish galleons and glorious victories which would replenish the Treasury. He could afford to be generous!

Buckingham's generosity was that of a prodigal who, setting out to pawn his watch to pay a debt, gives all the money in his pocket to a beggar. The simile is permissible, because one of the Duke's reasons in coming to Holland was actually to pawn the Crown jewels of England. Charles, in his desperate need of funds to carry on the war, had hit upon this plan to raise ready money. The jewels were worth an enormous sum, and it was probable that the Jews of Amsterdam would advance at least their usual percentage on the value of such securities. But the Jews of Amsterdam were cautious. In the case of such a pledge not being redeemed in the time allowed, it would not be permissible to break up the Regalia of the English King, and they could not squeeze him like an ordinary Christian. The business was not in their line, and they declined to make an offer.

Buckingham, after twenty days at the Hague, succeeded in getting the signatures of Denmark and the States General to a Treaty, engaging them to a Protestant alliance with England to continue the war against Spain and Austria; and he now proposed to carry out his plan to cross to France and lay siege to Louis and his ministers. But he had received letters from Charles which showed that his irritation against the French household of the Queen was reaching a crisis which, if he had his way, would certainly cause great anger to the French King.

"STEENIE" (he wrote),

"I writt to you by Ned Clarke* that I thought I would have cause enough in short time to put away this mousers ['mounseers'] in short time, either by attempting to steal

* One of Buckingham's confidential servants, and the same who in disguise carried the letter to Bristol, ordering him to postpone the delivery of the marriage proxies.

away my wife, or by making plots with my own subjects. For the first I cannot say certainly whether it was intended, but I am sure it is hindered ; for the other, though I have good grounds to believe it, and am still hunting after it, yet seeing daily the maliciousness of the mousers by making and fomenting discontentments in my wife, I could tarie no longer from advertising of you that I mean to seek no other grounds to cashier my mousers, having for this purpose sent you this letter that you may, if you think good, advertise the Queen Mother with my intention, for this being an action that may have a sort of harshness, I thought it was fit to take this way, that she to whom I have had many obligations may not take it unkindly, and likeways I think I have done you no wrong in my letter, though in some place of it I may seem to chide you. I pray you send me word with what speed you may, whether you like this course or not, for I shall put nothing of this in execution while [until] I hear from you : in the mean time I shall think of the convenient means to do this business with the best mind. But I am resolute ; it must be done, and that shortly. So longing to see thee, I rest,

“ Your loving, faithful,

“ constant friend,

“ CHARLES R.

“ HAMPTON COURT

“ *The 20th of Nov., 1625.*”

But Buckingham was unable to present the letter enclosed with his own to the Queen-Mother, because, upon mentioning this proposed journey to the French ambassador at the Hague, he was now told quite bluntly that King Louis would not permit him to enter his kingdom until the promises given in the marriage treaty had been properly fulfilled. Buckingham, therefore, abandoned his journey to France for the time being (though he did not by any means give up the idea entirely), and hastened back to England with the Treaty of the Hague in his pocket. He was, on the whole, well satisfied with the result of his embassy, and believed that when the news of English victories at sea came home, he would be able to face a new Parliament with assurance, and with a confident appeal for new subsidies to continue his successes.

Alas! the first news that reached him when he landed in England was the utter failure of Cecil and Essex, and the disasters that had befallen the English fleet. To any other man but Buckingham it would have been an overwhelming blow. But, though it must have staggered him, he carried his head high, and did not show any sign of faltering in his purpose. Such courage and optimism would have been magnificent in a man of greater genius; they are often the qualities which build success out of disaster. But Buckingham's heart was greater than his head, and he was singularly lacking, not only in foresight which sees the result of a certain line of policy, but in administrative genius which pays attention to small details and to the drudgery by which alone great plans are matured and brought to great issues.

Upon his return to Court after his brief absence, he found that the King's domestic life was becoming more and more unhappy on account of the Queen's habit of sulking among her French people, and a fresh cause of annoyance now added fuel to the fire in the King's heart. He had decided that his coronation, which had been long postponed on account of the plague, should take place before the opening of a new Parliament, which had now been summoned. He naturally expected that the Queen would take part in his solemn consecration, but to his profound dissatisfaction he learnt that, upon the advice of her clergy, she objected to join in a Protestant ceremony. The French King, upon being appealed to, upheld his sister's decision, and maintained that she could only attend if the Protestant clergy were absent. That, of course, was an impossible condition, and when, on the 2nd of February, Charles proceeded to his throne at Westminster, the Queen's empty chair reminded him bitterly of the great gulf that existed between him and his wife. But he was cheered somewhat by the heartiness with which his people greeted him and hailed him King. In spite of all political discontent in the nation, Charles himself was not unpopular, and Buckingham alone was held responsible for all the disasters and troubles of the time. Sir Symonds D'Ewes, who was present at the coronation, tells a curious little anecdote about the King and Buckingham, which, though of trivial importance at the time, seemed to have had an ominous meaning in the light of events that followed.

"There was," he wrote, "a wooden scaffold set up in Westminster Hall, upon which some ceremonies were to be performed before the coronation, which was afterwards to be solemnly officiated in the quire of Westminster Church. I stood at the lower end of the stairs of the scaffold when the King and George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, came, close together, to ascend the steps. The Duke, who went close by me, put forth his right hand to have taken the King by the left arm, and to have assisted him in his ascending ; at which His Highness at an instant got his left hand under the Duke's right arm, and, whether he would or not, led him up the stairs, saying, 'I have more need to help you than you have to help me ;' which speech I the rather thought upon when the said Duke, being questioned in the Parliament ensuing for his life, the King, to prevent his further danger, made an abortive dissolution of that great assembly."

It is possible that the ceremony of Coronation had inspired Charles with a desire to assert his sovereign will more independently, but whether this was the cause or no, it is certain that in his relations with France from this date, and for some months afterwards, Charles took the reins out of Buckingham's hands (though not through any unfriendliness or want of confidence in the Duke), and rode at tilt against his brother-in-law, Louis of France. Buckingham was all for conciliation, and, waiving for a time his desire to go as ambassador extraordinary to Paris, sent the Earl of Holland and Sir Dudley Carleton, who had formerly been minister at the Hague, to settle the differences that had arisen between the two Courts. Holland, with his charming manners and easy temper, and Carleton, with his cautious and shrewd talent for diplomacy, were the right men to smooth over outstanding difficulties. But Charles sent them dispatches couched in such unreasonable terms that they had to adopt, against their will, a hostile attitude towards Richelieu's offers of compromise, and when they accepted certain terms on their own authority, Charles repudiated their concessions and forced their hands by new and stringent instructions.

There were several causes of complaint on the side of France. In the first place, Charles had not kept his pledges in the marriage treaty, either in regard to the Queen's liberty of worship and the status of her household, or as regards religious



HENRIETTA MARIA OF FRANCE, QUEEN OF ENGLAND
FROM A PORTRAIT BY VANDYCK

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toleration generally in England. In the second place, there had been trouble on both sides over the capture of merchant vessels carrying Spanish contraband of war. French ships had been seized and taken as prizes to Plymouth, and the French had retaliated by capturing English vessels. In some cases the English had been justified in their action, but in some others the ships seized had not carried contraband, and Louis had demanded their release in vain. In the third place, Louis accused Charles of intervening in the domestic politics of France in a manner which no proud nature could tolerate. The Protestants of Rochelle were still in revolt against their King, who had not agreed to their terms of surrender, and the English ships, which had been lent for another purpose, were being used against Rochelle. Louis was prepared to make peace with his rebellious subjects in the interests of peace within his own nation, but he was not at all willing to do so at the dictation of the English, and he deeply resented the attitude adopted by Charles, who, while pressing him in a dictatorial manner to grant religious liberty to his French Protestants, was making more stringent the penal laws against English Catholics. The rashness and arrogance of Buckingham were now surpassed by the rashness and arrogance of Charles. Rejecting the assurances which Louis had, in the interests of peace, given upon certain conditions to the two ambassadors at his Court, and refusing to fulfil the pledges he had given as to the Queen's household and religious toleration in England, he demanded a written agreement by which the French Government should make peace with Rochelle, himself being nominated as the arbitrator and defender of the Rochellois. He also threatened that if the English ships were not returned he would send a fleet to Rochelle to bring them back by force. Buckingham, of course, did not oppose Charles in this manner of dealing with the French diplomatic overtures, and naturally his temper with Louis and his ministers was in harmony with that of the King, because he had been grievously vexed with the failure of his great dream of an effective military alliance with France. But he still had hopes that France would be useful to him, and, realizing to some extent, at least, the enormous responsibilities on his shoulders already, was, at this period, anxious to avoid an absolute breach with France. To Blainville, the French

ambassador in London, he was, therefore, less stiff-necked than Charles, but personal amiability could not check the tide of circumstance upon which the nation was inevitably drifting towards a war with France, in addition to war with Spain and Austria.

Such was the political atmosphere, charged with dangerous electricity, and full of portents and ill'omens, in which the second Parliament of Charles assembled at Westminster in February of 1626.

The King's speech from the throne was brief and without significance, and Lord Keeper Coventry, who followed him, said nothing about the relations of England with foreign powers, nor a word about the need of money to carry on the war. Rudyard, a creature of the Court, who then spoke, was equally mysterious in his reticence on subjects which dominated the mind of every patriotic Englishman. But when Sir John Coke rose to his feet, it was to come to the only reason for which Charles had summoned the national assembly. He proposed, though in a vague and guarded manner, that the Commons should proceed to grant supplies. As soon as he sat down, Sir John Eliot, who had been the friend of Buckingham, who was a moderate man, a patriot, and no fanatic, stood in his place, and the speech which then came passionately from his soul and kindled his lips with fire, echoed afterwards in the hearts of the English people. He demanded that the inquiry into past disasters should precede the granting of immediate supplies. As he went on to give his reasons, his words came fast and were winged with a kind of soaring eloquence.

"Sir," he cried, "I beseech you cast your eyes about! View the state we are in! Consider the loss we have received! Weigh the wrecked and ruined honour of our nation! O, the incomparable hopes of our most excellent Sovereign checked in their first design! Search the preparation. Examine the going forth. Let your wisdom travel through the whole action, to discern the fault, to know the faulty. For I presume to say, though no man undertook it, you would find the ancient genius of this nation rise up to the accuser. Is the reputation and glory of our nation of a small value? Are the walls and bulwarks of our kingdom of no esteem? Are the numberless lives of our lost men not to be regarded? I know it cannot so harbour in an English thought. Our honour is ruined, our

ships are sunk, our men perished ; not by the sword, not by the enemy, not by chance, but, as the strongest predictions had discerned and made it apparent beforehand, by those we trust. Sir, I would lose myself in the complaint, the miseries, the calamities, which our western parts have both seen, and still feel, they strike so strong an apprehension on me."

This was not the speech of a private member of Parliament in political argument. It was the voice of the English people. It expressed the terrors, the shame, the despair of a great nation. It was not wrathful. It was a cry for help, that "the ancient genius of the kingdom" might again be enthroned. And though it did not mention one man's name, one name was written in flaming letters upon the wall as the agent of England's misery—George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham. In the days that followed, the finger of fate pointed at Buckingham. In committee the House considered the protest of France against the seizure of the "St. Peter," of Hâvre de Grâce—ignorant as they were of the real relations between France and England—and it seemed to show that Buckingham had refused to restore it for reasons of private advantage. Heath, the new Attorney-General, and one of Buckingham's men, disproved this suspicion to the satisfaction of a small majority of the House, but this did not whitewash his patron, who, as the responsible minister for a succession of disasters, seemed to the Commons as black as night itself. They still refused to vote supplies, and demanded an inquiry into the council and conduct of war. It was an unconstitutional demand, and the King refused it upon the advice of Heath. In the meanwhile, Pembroke in the House of Peers was urging the necessity of granting subsidies for continuance of the war and for the honour of England, and on the 10th of March Sir Richard Weston asked the Commons to vote the money without ado, so that the enemy might not triumph.

A voice in the Commons replied to Weston by flinging out a bitter taunt aimed at Buckingham, though still that name was not openly spoken. It was the voice of "Clem Coke," the quarrelsome son of old Coke, the famous Lord Chief Justice. "It is better," he said, "to die by an enemy than to suffer at home." He was followed by a man of no previous reputation, named Dr. Turner, who now dared to accuse

Buckingham by name, and by questions of terrible directness. They were put in the following form :—

(1) Whether the Duke, being Admiral, be not the cause of the loss of the King's Royalty in the narrow seas?

(2) Whether the unreasonable, exorbitant, and immense gifts of money and lands bestowed on the Duke and his kindred be not the cause of impairing the King's Revenue and impoverishing the Crown?

(3) Whether the multiplicity of offices conferred upon the Duke and others depending upon him (whereof they were not capable) be not the cause of the evil Government of this Kingdom?

(4) Whether recusants in general, by a kind of connivancy, be not born out and increased by reason of the Duke's mother and father-in-law being known Papists?

(5) Whether the sale of honours, offices, and places of judicature, and ecclesiastical livings and promotions (a scandal and hurt to the Kingdom) be not through the Duke?

(6) Whether the Duke's staying at home, being Admiral and General in the Fleet of the Sea and Land Army, were not the cause of the bad success and overthrow of that action, and whether he did give good direction for that design? *

Charles was deeply incensed by this attack upon his friend and Minister, and by Sir Richard Weston sent down a stern message to the House commenting upon the seditious speech of Clem Coke, and the still more offensive accusations of Dr. Turner. "This, his Majesty saith, is such an example that he can by no means suffer, though it were to make enquiry into the meanest of his servants, much less against one so near unto himself." The King therefore called upon the House to do justice against the offenders.

The Commons were so little daunted by the King's anger that Sir W. Walters, speaking on the following Monday, declared that the cause of all their grievances was that "all the King's Council rides upon one horse," and followed this statement with a speech aimed at Buckingham, though without alluding to him by name. Sir John Eliot then continued the debate, and less passionately, but more bitterly than in his first great speech, surveyed the state of the country, and hinted plainly at

* Rushworth's "Historical Collections," 1682.

Buckingham's responsibility. With regard to the war which had led to such disasters, "This great design," he said, "was fixed upon the person of the Lord-General, who had the whole command by sea and land. And can this great general think it sufficient to put in his deputy and stay at home?" Then turning to the course of the war in Germany and the calamity to the English troops under Mansfeld, he said, "We know well who had then the King's ear." More daring later in his speech, he recalled two other King's favourites, Hubert de Burgh, under Henry III., and the Earl of Suffolk, under Richard II., both of whom had been called in question by Parliament before supplies would be granted. After a bitter allusion to the attempt to pawn the Crown jewels, Eliot concluded his speech by supporting a motion for the grant of "three subsidies and three-fifteenths," which he submitted was all they could vote in the circumstances, though they might increase the supplies "upon just occasions."

To Buckingham, Eliot's behaviour in the Parliament must have seemed black-hearted treason to their old friendship. He could never tolerate even the mildest criticism from those with whom he was on terms of intimacy. After his rise to fortune, he had so many enemies eager to stab his reputation that his nature was always on guard, and he was too ready to charge an outspoken friend with disloyalty and ingratitude. Until the meeting of the new House of Commons, Eliot had not been openly in opposition. But now, after this bitter speech, he must be reckoned with as a viper whom Buckingham had nourished in his bosom. Lucky for him that he was a Parliament man, and not an officer of State. If he had not been protected by the liberties of the Commons, Buckingham would have put his heel upon Eliot's neck and crushed him to his mother-earth.

Charles had cause to be profoundly disturbed. This attack on Buckingham was a challenge to himself, for Buckingham's policy was his own, and every action, every negotiation with foreign powers, every pledge and promise of his Minister had been with his, the King's, authority and cognisance. His reputation was therefore bound up with Buckingham's, and he could not suffer the Commons to use words which, by accusing his friend of dishonour, contained high treason towards his own person and sovereign power.

With a determination not to suffer the insolence (as it seemed to him) of a disorderly assembly, Charles summoned the Lords and Commons to Whitehall, and standing before them with a cold and gloomy face, declared to the members of the Lower House that he had called them there "to show them their errors and their unparliamentary proceedings in this Parliament."

It was the Lord Keeper Coventry who, by the King's command, spoke of his Majesty's cause for complaint. After declaring the love Charles bore to his people, and his determination to be a just King and to listen to any grievances presented to him in a dutiful way, he came to "the seditious speeches" of Clement Cook and Dr. Turner, and of those who had continued in their tone, and expressed the King's surprise that his remonstrance had passed unheeded, and the offenders unpunished.

"Concerning the Duke of Buckingham, his Majesty hath commanded me to tell you that himself doth know better than any man living the sincerity of the Duke's proceedings; with what cautions of weight and discretion he hath been guided in his public employments from his Majesty and his blessed Father; what enemies he hath procured at home and abroad; what peril of his person, and hazard of his estate he ran into for the service of his Majesty and his ever-blessed Father; and how forward he hath been in the service of this House many times since his return from Spain, and therefore his Majesty cannot believe that the aim is at the Duke of Buckingham, but findeth that these proceedings do directly wound the honour and judgment of himself and of his father. It is therefore his Majesty's express and final commandment that you yield obedience unto those directions which you have formerly received, and cease this unparliamentary inquisition, and commit unto his Majesty's care and wisdom and justice the future reformation of those things which you suppose should be otherwise than they should be.*

Coventry then touched upon the grant of money voted by the Commons, which the King, he said, considered altogether inadequate for the safety and honour of the nation: "for his Majesty cannot expect without better help, but that his allies

* Rushworth.

must presently disband and leave him alone to bear the fury of a provoked and powerful enemy, so as both he and you shall be unsafe at home, and ashamed and despised abroad."

Upon the conclusion of Coventry's speech, Charles again addressed the Commons in person, and reminding the Lords and Commons that the war had been entered upon at the advice of "the whole body of Parliament," declared that "then there was nobody in so great favour with you as the man whom you now seem to touch, but indeed my father's government and mine."

Then he spoke words ominous of those dreadful differences between the King and the Parliament, which in after-years shook the very foundations of the nation, plunged England in a bloody Civil War, and brought Charles to the tall scaffold in Whitehall.

"Remember," he said, "that Parliaments are altogether in my power for their calling, sitting, or dissolution; therefore, as I find the fruits of them good or evil, they are to continue or not to be."

We do not know how this speech was received when the words came clear and stern to the ears of the members. We are not told of the dead silence and grave, resolute faces in the State salon of Whitehall, nor of low and ominous murmurs. But in the debate that followed the speeches of the King and the Lord Keeper, the Commons turned the House into a Grand Committee, and ordering the doors to be locked and that no member should go forth, declared that all proceedings in all other Committees would cease until the House came to a resolution in the business.

At the Court, when this ominous temper of the Commons was reported, there was uneasiness, something almost like fear. Charles, reflecting upon his words, wondered whether he had gone a little too far in thus chiding and challenging so plainly the representatives of the people. He had read enough history to know that an open rupture with Parliament had been disastrous to more than one king. Buckingham proposed, or accepted the task of smoothing down the angry feelings of the Commons, by explaining the political situation with more frankness and friendliness at a conference of both Houses in the Painted Chamber. It was characteristic of him to believe that

by the persuasiveness of his personality he could convert enemies into friends, and it was a proof of his courage and self-confidence that he could face the men who had demanded vengeance against him with an easy affability that revealed no sign of faltering or fear. His explanation, as it was called, was an adroit and subtle piece of special pleading. One's admiration, indeed, is stirred by the admirable tone of the speech, in which he blended dignity with condescension and frankness with an honourable pride. He appealed first to the patriotism of the assembly and to their common sense. The honour of the nation as well as its safety demanded the resolute prosecution of the war. For that larger supplies were necessary than the Commons had yet voted.

"As it was a good rule to fear all things and nothing, and to be liberal was sometimes thrifty ; so in this particular, if you give largely you shall carry the war to the enemy's door, and keep that peace at home that hath been ; whereas, on the contrary, if you draw the war at home, it brings with it nothing but disturbance and fear, all courses of justice stopped, and each man's revenue lessened, and nothing that can be profitable." Thus in a modest yet confident way he turned to his own actions, and defended himself with a kind of careless desire to be well in the opinion of his accusers, as he was satisfied with his own conscience. "I wish my heart and actions were known to you all," he said, "then I assure myself you would resume me to your good opinions."

Whatever actions he had done, he declared, had been with the advice and authority of the Privy Council, and he called on Lord Conway to bear him out in that statement, the proof of which lay in the reports of the councils, which Lord Conway had in his keeping.

He then explained in detail his recent negotiations at the Hague, claiming credit for the Treaty which he had there procured. He declared that there was good hope of France joining this federation, the policy of that nation being opposed to the greatness of Austria and the pride of Spain. In that case, the cost of the war to England would be much reduced.

Knowing as we do now the tone of the negotiations between Charles and the French Court, Buckingham's sincerity in alluding thus to the hope of a closer alliance with France may be

doubted. Yet not justly, for there is proof that the Duke was convinced that all difficulties could still be overcome if he could get to Paris and have friendly converse with Louis and his ministers.

"If in any of these employments," he went on with more emotion, "my errors may be shewed me, I shall take him for my best friend that will manifest them in particular. I have bent all my thoughts on nothing but my master's honour, the service of the State, and the safety of them both. I never had one end of my own, and that may be perceived and proved by the expense of my own estate. I am ashamed to speak of it, and it would become another man's tongue better than my own. My journey into Spain was all at my own charge; my journey into France was at my master's charge; my journey into the Low Countries was all at my own charge."

He then defended his administration of the Admiralty, and, speaking with honour and generosity of his "noble predecessor," the Earl of Nottingham, protested that upon receiving the office of Admiral, which he had accepted reluctantly, being young and inexperienced, though for that reason ready, as he always was, to be governed by advice, he had found the navy weak, with few and unserviceable ships. Since then, acting under the commission appointed over him, he had steadily increased the strength of the fleet, though it had suffered from shipwrecks, and there was at that present time many great ships on the active list, provided at no more cost than was possible.

He concluded with an appeal to the forbearance and justice of his accusers.

"Gentlemen, it is no time to pick quarrels with one another; we have enemies enough already, and therefore more necessary to be well united at home.

"Follow not examples, and least of all the examples of Gondomar and Iniosa, who would have had my head when you thought me worthy of a salute. Now, though I confess there may be some errors, I will not justify myself,—yet they are not such gross defects as the world would make them appear. . . . They are no errors of wilfulness, nor of corruption, nor oppressing of the people, nor injustice, nor contrary; and then, may I say, for what good done by me do I suffer?"

His last words were not without a real eloquence, nor without a high and chivalrous idealism, which, in spite of much that was petty in his character, inspired this strange and complex soul.

"Now, Gentlemen, you that were ancient Parliament-men when this Council was first given, strive to make good your own engagement, for the honour of your King and your own safety. Let Religion, in which I would be glad to be more watchful and industrious than any, unite your hearts both at home and abroad ; and you that are young men, may in these active times gain honour and reputation, which is almost rank, and gain the ancient glory of your predecessors : and remember it is for restoring to her inheritance the most virtuous Lady and Saint in the world. I have nothing more, but to entreat your charitable opinion of me and my actions."

To arrive at a right judgment upon Buckingham's character we must consider his own estimate of his actions, and in his speech, which has the ring of sincerity, we find his best defence. Not a word of what he then said was deliberately or even actually untrue. He was not corrupt, he had spent out of his own fortune in the service of the State, he had always at heart the honour of his King and country. He had done his best to create a great navy, he had been industrious and active as a war minister, he had never been influenced in any of his public actions by base private interests or the greed of gold. All this we must allow him ; but there still remains his responsibility, shared equally by Charles, for the deplorable disasters that had dogged all his actions, due, not to any corruption of character, but to a rash temperament, an utter lack of political foresight or wisdom, and the whole system of favouritism of which he was the centre and fountain-head, which gave important posts to men of inefficiency.

CHAPTER XI

THE IMPEACHMENT OF BUCKINGHAM

THIS speech had not the slightest effect on the members of the Lower House. Perhaps it brought home to them the thought that the King and the Privy Council had been equally guilty of the national disasters. But they could not and did not desire to attack the King's majesty, and they must have a victim with whom he had shared his responsibility. Buckingham had been the moving spirit of these things, and Buckingham must be dethroned. They went on with the preparations for his impeachment, interrupted only by a short recess. In the mean time it was made clear to them that fresh folly was being brewed, or fresh miseries. Holland and Carleton were recalled from France. Louis was resolved not to accept the interference of a foreign power in his relations with his own people, and he made more stringent demands for the submission of the Rochellese. They, fearing now that the liberty of their faith would be destroyed, appealed for aid from Charles, and he promised to protect them against their own King. The tide was drifting fast now towards the quicksands, and the thunderclouds of a new war loomed darkly up before the gloomy vision of the English people.

There now stepped into the arena a man whom both the King and Buckingham had most cause to fear, and the challenge that he flung at the Duke was more dangerous than the accusations in the Commons. This was Digby, Earl of Bristol, who at this time had been in retirement, brooding over his wrongs, waiting in vain for Charles to make him the *amende honorable*, and to clear his reputation of charges which he had not been allowed to defend by public trial. That trial he now demanded of his peers, and seizing the opportunity of a

time when Buckingham was awaiting impeachment, he accused him of conspiracy against his (Bristol's) liberty and honour, and of treasonable behaviour towards his King and country.

To the King and his minister the reappearance of Bristol must have been like a horrid ghost arising from the dead past with accusing voice. That voice could no longer be stifled, and Charles, realizing that a deadly duel was inevitable, in which his own honour would be at stake, decided to strike the first blow. He therefore formally accused Bristol of high treason. An extraordinary situation was now created. Bristol drew up his charges against Buckingham, and the King and Buckingham the indictment against Bristol, while the House of Commons, postponing all other business, prepared the impeachment against the Duke.

The King's case against Bristol was not a strong one, and rested chiefly on the accusation that Bristol had used influence to induce him to change his religion, and that, having more regard for Spain than for England, he had disobeyed the King's instructions, and had given false information and assurances by which the King had been led astray. It was, indeed, owing to false assurances that, as Prince, Charles had been induced to take his "long and perilous journey into Spain, that thereby he might speedily conclude those treaties, or perfectly discover that, on the Emperor's and the King of Spain's part, there was no true and real intention to bring the same to conclusion upon any fit and honourable terms and conditions, and did absolutely and speedily break them off."* In the last paragraph Charles accused Bristol of having given him the lie direct by denying, and offering to falsify the relation of the journey given to Parliament by Buckingham, which he, Charles himself, had confirmed.

To these charges Bristol made a powerful defence, and had but little difficulty in proving his fidelity to the Protestant faith, and his honour towards his country. Then he turned to the conduct of the Duke of Buckingham and related the true story of the manner in which, after his return from Spain, Buckingham had conspired against his liberty of person and of speech. He concluded by demanding that Buckingham, who was accused of treason, and still at liberty, should be put into an equal

* Rushworth.

condition with himself, who was a prisoner. After this general defence and challenge, Bristol was taken back into custody, and his formal charges against the Duke were read out in the House of Lords. He accused Buckingham of having conspired with Gondomar and the Pope to induce Charles, then Prince of Wales, to change his religion. That he had "nourished the Spanish ministers, not only in the belief of his own being popishly affected, but did (both by absenting himself from all exercises of religion constantly used in the Earl of Bristol's house, and frequented by all Protestant English, and by conforming himself to please the Spaniards in divers right of their Religion even so far to kneel and adore their Sacrament) from time to time give the Spaniards hope of the Prince his conversion." Then, when through his insolent and outrageous behaviour to the Spanish king and ministers he had made agreement impossible, he endeavoured to break off the match, "not for any service to the kingdom, nor dislike of the match in itself, nor for that he found (as since he hath pretended) that the Spaniards did not really intend the said match, but out of his particular ends and his indignation." Bristol then accused the Duke of lustful behaviour in Spain, by which he had done dishonour to the English nation and the Prince, and had left behind him much scandal in a foreign court. Finally, he accused him of being the cause of the disasters of the Elector Palatine, as far as the affairs of that prince had relation to this country.

It is a sad reflection upon human life that Charles, who was in many ways a man of high ideals, and Bristol, who, in his career as an ambassador, had been unswerving in honour, should have solemnly written down charges which, if not blinded by passion, they must have known to be false. Charles should have known, and must in his secret heart have known, that Bristol, though, in his opinion, guilty of indiscretion and obstinacy, had never tampered with truth, and had never betrayed his patriotism. And Bristol, on the other hand, though his conscience was clear as to his own actions, distorted the facts in his relation of Buckingham's conduct in Spain. He had a right to accuse Buckingham of vanity and folly, of insolence and arrogance, and personal enmity to himself; but he should have known that none of these things had led to the breaking off of the match, and that, so far from inducing the Spaniards to

hope in the Prince's conversion, Buckingham had, in a violent manner, disabused them of that idea at an early period of the visit to Madrid. But by exaggeration and passion, both Charles and Bristol gave a false colour to the true facts, and, like plaintiffs in a common lawsuit, made up for want of evidence by verbose abuse.

Bristol's demand that Buckingham should be arrested and confined during his trial was protested against by the King, and the peers did not go to his extremity. A note of the charges against the Duke was sent to him so that he might prepare answers, and Buckingham wanted the indictment with a comfortable disregard to its gravity. He had as usual an easy conscience. Confident that in all his actions he had had the interests of his country at heart, and knowing that Charles shared his responsibility, and was prepared to support him loyally against his enemies, he felt that this outcry was a mere expression of popular and political passion inspired by prejudice and by ignorance of the true facts, which would be dispelled the sincerity of his defence. So cheerful was he at this time that his impeachment seemed sheer nonsense, to be treated with disdain and hilarity. When the deputation from the Commons appeared before a conference of both Houses to read the articles against him, he sat directly opposite his accusers in insolent ease, that was very galling to some of them, and showed contempt for their action by laughing in their faces.

It was on the eighth of May that these articles were presented by the eight members of the impeachment, who had befallen the nation, and found an here to name, the Duke of Buckingham, as the preamble of the impeachment which, as the honours and offices bestowed on George Villiers, was an historical curiosity—

**"THE COMMON DECLARATION AND IMPEACHMENT AGAINST
THE DUKE OF BUCKINGHAM.**

"For the speedy redress of great Evils and Mischiefs, and of the great cause of these Evils and Mischiefs which this Kingdom of ENGLAND now grievously suffereth, and of late years hath suffered; and to the honour and safety of our Sovereign Lord the King, and of his Crown and Dignity; and to the good and welfare of his People, The Commons in the present Parliament, by the authority of our said Sovereign Lord the King, assembled, Do, by this their Bill, shew and declare against GEORGE, Duke, Marquis, and Earl of BUCKINGHAM, Earl of COVENTRY, Viscount VILLIERS, Baron of WHADDON, Great Admiral of the Kingdoms of ENGLAND and IRELAND, and of the Principality of WALES, and of the Dominions and Islands of the same, of the Town of CALAIS, and of the Marches of the same, and of NORMANDY, GASCOIGNE, and GUIENNE, General, Governour of the Seas and Ships of the said Kingdom, Lieutenant-General Admiral, Captain-General and Governor of his Majesty's Royal Fleet and Army lately set forth, Master of the Horse of our Sovereign Lord the King, Lord Warden, Chancellor and Admiral of the Cinque Ports, and of the Members thereof, Constable of DOVER Castle, Justice in Eyre of the Forests and Chases on this side the River TRENT, Constable of the Castle of WINDSOR, Gentleman of his Majesty's Bed-Chamber, one of his Majesty's Most Honourable Privy Council in his Realms both in ENGLAND, SCOTLAND, and IRELAND, and Knight of the most Honourable Order of the Garter: The Misdemeanors, Misprisions, Offences, Crimes, and other Matters, comprised in the articles following; and him the said Duke do accuse and impeach of the said Misdemeanors, Misprisions, Offences and Crimes."

Sir Dudley Digges was evidently a man who prided himself upon eloquence modelled on the great classical orations. With an extraordinary flow of mixed metaphors, and with an astronomical allegory in which there was a prodigious amount of sham science, he likened the Duke of Buckingham to "a prodigious Comet" and "a Blazing Star," whose course was "so exorbitant in all the affairs of the Commonwealth" that the

Commons had been blinded by it. Then, after a summary of the charges prepared against the Duke, he uttered words which to Charles, who read them afterwards, must have appeared as an attack upon his sovereign prerogative. Alluding to the King's favour to Buckingham, and the Duke's plea that he acted with the King's authority, he declared that "the laws of England teach us that Kings cannot command ill or unlawful things, when ever they speak, though by their letters patent or their seals. If the things be evil, these letters patent are void, and what ever ill event succeeds, the execution of such commands must ever answer for them."

After this bold assertion of the right of the representatives of the people to set aside the authority of the King when he commanded "ill or unlawful things"—a statement of revolutionary doctrine at a time when Laud was preaching and Charles asserting the Divine Right of Kings—Sir Dudley Digges took his seat, and was followed, one after another, by Edward Herbert, Selden, Glanville, Pym, Sherland, Wandesford, and Sir John Eliot, who divided the articles of the impeachment and elaborated them with lengthy arguments.

It would be tedious and unprofitable to give at any length the details of these accusations, which painted Buckingham as a monster of iniquity, and attacked his private character and his public work with a vast and appalling battery of seventeenth-century eloquence, which thundered and reverberated with ponderous periods, and burst into rockets of metaphor.

Briefly the charges were as follows:—

Buckingham, with exorbitant ambition, had obtained a plurality of offices, whose duties could not be efficiently performed by one man, thus being therefore a danger to the State, as well as a discouragement to others whose virtues and abilities were precluded from these public employments.

Buckingham had, contrary to the law, bought such public offices, two instances being given. He had paid £3000 to the Earl of Nottingham, in addition to a pension, for the office of Lord Admiral. He had paid £1000 to Lord Zouch for the office of Warden of the Cinque Ports.

Buckingham had, in his office as Lord Admiral, so neglected his duties that the Channel was infested with pirates, to the great damage of English trade.



GEORGE DIGBY, EARL OF BRISTOL
AFTER A PORTRAIT BY VANDYCK

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ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATION

Buckingham, by seizing the ships of a friendly power (France), under pretence that they were prizes conveying contraband of war, had caused reprisals to be made, to the further damage of the merchant fleets of the kingdom.

Buckingham had oppressed the East India merchants, and therefore caused more harm to trade, by delaying the voyage of these ships under pretence that they had been guilty of piracy, and had caused them to be fined £10,000, which he claimed for his office of the Admiralty.

Buckingham had surrendered English ships to the French Government, knowing full well that they would be used against the Protestants of Rochelle, with whom we were brothers in faith, and he had plotted with Captain Pennington in command of those ships, to hand over the vessels, in spite of the fact that he, Buckingham, had declared to the Parliament that they should not be so used.

Buckingham had sold places and taxes for corrupt practices, to the great dishonour of the English peerage and the nation. Among other cases he had, for the sum of £20,000, sold the office of Lord High Treasurer to the Earl of Middlesex.

Buckingham had used his great influence with the late King to procure titles for his numerous kinsfolk, so that his family had been exalted above all others.

Buckingham had procured sums of money issued under the Privy Seal to persons named by himself, but afterwards employed to his own use. He had also bartered and exchanged Crown properties to his own personal advantage, and had caused great confusion between the King's estate and his own, so that it could not be distinguished by the records and entries which should have been kept for the safety of his Majesty's treasure.

Lastly, contrary to the strict law safeguarding the person and health of the Sovereign, he had caused medicine to be administered to the King in his last illness contrary to the will of the Royal physicians.*

Two days were spent in the elaboration of this formidable indictment, and on the third day Sir John Eliot rose to make the concluding speech. It was the final evolution of Eliot's

* This is a brief summary of the charges as given in full detail in Rushworth's "Historical Collections."

attitude towards the Duke. At first his friend, he had attempted a friendly compromise. Then he had gone over to the opposition, and later had hinted at his responsibility for the national distress. Then he had denounced him by name, and now, as his declared enemy, poured out upon him, from a passionate heart, an indignation terrible and violent in its language.

Having spoken in general terms of the charges against Buckingham thus laid before the Parliament, he analyzed the character of the man.

"First, I purpose unto your Lordships the inward character of the Duke's mind, which is full of collusion and deceit ; I can express it no better than by the Beast, so called by the ancients *Stellionatus* ; a Beast so blurr'd, so spotted, so full of foul lines, that they knew not what to make of it ; so do we find in this man's practice, who first inveigled the merchants, drawing them to Dieppe to be enthralled ; then dealt deceitfully with the King to colour his offences, his design being against Rochelle and against the Religion ; next with the Parliament, to disguise his actions ; a practice no less dangerous and disadvantageous to us, than prejudicial to our friends and allies."

Eliot then went on to denounce the Duke for his whole conduct regarding the loan of the English ships, declaring that even if the King had given authority for such action, the Duke should have opposed it by his prayers and intercessions. Nor was it any excuse that the ships, as he had heard, had been captured. "The French, in this case, are to be commended, not be excused ; he left them in the hands of a Foreign Power, who when they once had used them, for anything he knew, might easily have kept them."

Coming to the business of the East India merchants, which Eliot called an extortion, one of the peers interposed privately that it had been done by the King's command. Upon which Eliot passionately protested to the loyalty of the Commons, on whose behalf he spoke.

"Far be it from them to lay an odium or aspersion on his Majesty's name ; they hold his honour spotless, nor the least shadow of blemish fix upon him in this business."

Then reaching now the full pitch of his great wrath, Eliot flung himself upon his former friend.

"Next to the foul extortion, is bribery and corruption in the sale of honour and offices of command. That which was wont to be the crown of Virtue and Merit, is now become a merchandise for the greatness of this man, and the Justice itself made a prey unto him." He had by such corrupt means raised a party in the State, protecting himself by his allies and kindred.

"And thus he hath drawn to him and his the power of Justice, the power of Honour, and the power of Command, and in effect the whole power of the Kingdom, for both peace and war, to strengthen his allies, and in setting up himself, hath set upon the Kingdom's revenues, the fountain of supply, and the nerves of the land.

"He intercepts, consumes, and exhausts the resources of the Crown, not only to satisfy his own lustful desires, but the luxury of others ; and by emptying the veins the blood should run in, he hath cast the body of the kingdom into an high consumption.

"Infinite sums of money, and mass of land, exceeding the values of money, contributions in Parliament have been heaped upon him, and how have they been employed ? Upon costly furniture, sumptuous feasting, and magnificent building, the visible evidences of the express exhausting of the State ; and yet his ambition, which is boundless, resteth not here, but like a violent flame bursteth forth, and getteth further scope : Not satisfied with injuries, and injustice, and dishonouring of religion, his attempts go higher, to the prejudice of his Sovereign, which is plain in his practice. The effects I fear to speak, and fear to think. . . .

"Your Lordships have an Idea of the Man, what he is in himself, what in his affections. You have seen his power, and some I fear have felt it ; you have known his practice and have heard the effects. It rests then to be considered what (being such) he is in reference to the King and State ; how compatible and incompatible with either ? In reference to the King he must be stiled the Canker in his Treasure ; in reference to the State, the Moth of all Goodness. . . .

"For his secret Intentions and Calumniation I wish this Parliament had not felt them, nor the other before. For his Pride and Flattery it is noted of Sejanus that he did *Clientes suos Provinciis adornare*. Doth not this man the like ? Ask

England, Scotland, and Ireland, and they will tell you. Sejanus's pride was so excessive, as Tacitus saith. He neglected all Council, mixed his business and service with the Prince, seeming to confound their actions, and was often stiled *Imperatoris laborum socius*. How lately and how often had this man commixed his actions in discourses with actions of the Kings?

"My Lords, I have done. You see the Man. Only this which was conceived by the knights, citizens and burgesses should be boldly by all spoken. That by him came all these evils, in him we find the Cause, and on him we expect the Remedies, and to this we meet your Lordships in conference, to which as your wisdom invites us, so we cannot doubt, but in your Lordships' wisdom, greatness, and power, he shall in due time, find judgment as he deserves."

This speech, addressed against a man still supreme in power, was by its astonishing boldness, and by its fiery eloquence, one of the greatest efforts of oratory recorded in the annals of Parliament. To those Lords who, as Eliot said, had felt the power of "the man," even to those peers who, like Pembroke, belonged to the Court party, yet had watched the comet-like career of Buckingham with distrust and dislike, above all, to the Commons, who believed that every word of Eliot's was inspired by truth, and in whose imagination Buckingham was monstrous, and a vampire sucking the life-blood of the nation, the speech must have seemed sublime in courage and righteous wrath. For years men had not dared to whisper against the King's Favourite, or, if they spoke in criticism of his conduct, had suffered from his vengeance. But now, loudly the voice of Eliot had rung out, like a trumpet, in defiance, blaring forth to the world the iniquities of which the man was believed guilty.

Impartial judges know now that the impeachment and Eliot's denunciation were not founded upon absolute truth, that the details of every charge were, indeed, false to the actual facts. A modern jury could hardly bring in a verdict of guilty upon any of the counts. Such an historian as Gardiner, who had but little sympathy with Buckingham, acquits him of having committed the crimes definitely laid to his charge. Nor was his personal character at all like the image painted in garish colours by Eliot and his colleagues. When Eliot said, "My

Lords, you see the man," his portrait was of a great criminal and a great traitor, corrupt and ruthless in all his actions. That was false. Buckingham was not a great criminal. He was not corrupt. He was not a traitor. Though he had accepted royal gifts gladly, his hands were singularly clean. There were few men in that age whose honesty amidst great opportunities and temptations was so unspotted. And his patriotism cannot be called in question. It was, indeed, the great passion and religion of his life ; not, as it must be admitted, of that pure and spiritual kind by which men serve their country in humility and without self-interest, but so identified with his own character and career that it was a glorified egotism, and to have betrayed his country would to Buckingham have been self-betrayal, unnatural and impossible to him. Technically, therefore, the impeachment of the Commons was, in many of its charges, unsupported by evidence. But it was nevertheless inspired by the spirit of truth. It was the expression of a nation's despair and wrath directed against the one man who could be held morally responsible for the calamities of England. He was not wholly to blame, for he was often only the figure-head of a rotten system, an agent impelled by forces outside himself, a man whose failures were often due to things over which he had no control. But there he was, the first minister of England, the right hand of the King, the champion of a disastrous policy, and when the Commons impeached him they found in him the most convenient and the most exalted victim for that sacrifice which must always be offered to the gods when a nation goes astray and is in misery.

To Charles and Buckingham the impeachment, as presented by the Commons, was an outrage and a lie. Charles was stung by the indirect attack upon his own person. "If the Duke is Sejanus," he said, "I must be Tiberius." He appealed to the Lords to defend his honour. He would take means to punish the offenders and, if he had not done so before, it was because Buckingham had pleaded with him to permit the impeachment to proceed so that his innocence could be made clear. Of that innocence there could be no doubt, because, "as touching the occasions against him" Charles could himself be a witness to clear him of every one of them. He was especially incensed against Sir Dudley Digges and Sir John Eliot. Both Digges

and Eliot had accused the Duke of conspiring against the late King's life, whereas the impeachment had only accused him of presumption in administering medicine contrary to the wish of the physicians. Digges had insinuated a horrible thing against Charles himself. In alluding to the plaster given to James, he had in a dark way added "that he would therein spare the honour of the King." That was a plain suggestion that Charles had conspired against his father's life. He would not tolerate such words from any one, in or outside Parliament.

When the Commons assembled one day, Digges and Eliot were not in their places, and the news soon spread that they had been carried to the Tower; a great commotion took place in the House at this breach of their liberties, and on the following morning when the Speaker rose they shouted to him to sit down. They would do no business until they were righted in their liberties.

Sir Dudley Carleton spoke on behalf of the King. He pointed out the scandalous imputation made by Digges against the King's honour, and then took it upon himself to answer those words of the same man who, in his prologue to the impeachment, had denied the King's authority. "I beseech you, gentlemen," he said, "move not his Majesty with trenching upon his prerogatives, lest you bring him out of love with Parliaments. . . . In all Christian kingdoms you know that Parliaments were in use anciently, until the monarchs began to know their own strength; and, seeing the turbulent spirit of their Parliaments, at length they, by little and little, began to stand upon their prerogatives, and at last overthrew all Parliaments throughout Christendom, except here only with us."

They were incautious words to use in a Parliament already rebellious in spirit and exceedingly proud. The Commons were only goaded into greater rage against the imprisonment of two of their members. They demanded their release with no humble voice, and Charles now found that there was a flaw in his case against Sir Dudley Digges. He denied having used the words attributed to him, and thirty-six Peers signed a declaration that they had heard nothing derogatory to the King's honour in the speech of this member. In view of this dangerously hostile attitude of the Commons, Charles thought it well to retreat from his position, and Digges was released. An

attempt was made to bring outside evidence of treason against Sir John Eliot ; but this also failed, and Eliot returned quietly triumphant to his place in the House ; after which the Commons drew up a general remonstrance of grievances to be sent to the King. Charles had not only failed in his will with the House of Commons, but had suffered a serious rebuff from the Lords. The Earl of Arundel had been arrested and confined in the Tower on a warrant from the King for having married Elizabeth Stuart, daughter of Laud's old friend Ludovic, Duke of Lennox, contrary to the will of Charles, who had designed this lady for Lord Lorne, the son of the Duke of Argyle. The Lords had resented Arundel's imprisonment without trial as an infringement upon their Orders with as much bitterness as the Commons had felt in the case of Digges and Eliot, and after several petitions to the King obtained the release of the young peer. This contest with the Lords upon a purely personal grudge at a time when he was seriously opposed by the Commons, showed the lamentable inability of the King to understand the moral forces around him.

While Buckingham was being charged with high treason by the representatives of the people, it happened that the Chancellorship of the University of Cambridge fell vacant, owing to the death of the Earl of Suffolk. Charles immediately expressed his desire that the Duke should receive this honourable title. It would be, he thought, a sign to the Commons that their impeachment had not altered his regard for Buckingham, and that outside a rebellious House the Duke's patronage was still coveted by men of light and learning. It would also be a check to the Calvinist element in the University, for Buckingham, like Charles himself, had come under the influence of Laud, whose High Church, or Anglican, theories defended the supreme power of the King over Church and State. The Masters of Trinity, Peterhouse, and Clare Hall used their influence in the Duke's favour, and threw their weight into the scale against the Earl of Berkshire, who was chosen as a candidate by the Calvinists. A stormy election took place, and the University was convulsed by partisan strife, but Buckingham was duly elected by a small majority of votes. When the news reached the House of Commons they protested against the appointment of a man who was accused of such

grave public crimes, but Charles promptly gave them to understand that they had no voice whatever in the affairs of a University over which Parliament had no control.

On June 8th, having received this new honour, Buckingham rose in his place in the House of Lords and submitted his answer to the impeachment. This had been drawn up by Heath, the Attorney-General, with the assistance of Laud and Nicholas Hyde, and, with the full knowledge of facts of which the Commons, in preparing the impeachment, had been only partly cognisant, was, on the whole, a convincing vindication of his honesty and honour.

In an opening speech Buckingham showed that graceful and winning affability which gave him such a glamour and charm. He was willing to forgive his accusers as men who had been led astray by passion and ignorance. With all the air of a man conscious of his own noble purpose he would not ask for pardon, but was there to grant it. He was not wrathful or impatient. *Noblesse oblige*, and not a word would he say against his "inferiors." Yet to his Peers he could show humility. To them he would give an explanation of his conduct and protest his patriotism.

"Who accused me?" he asked, and answered his own question with contempt. "Common fame. Who gave me up to your lordships? The House of Commons.

"The one is too subtle a body, if a body, the other too great, for me to contest with: and I am confident, when my cause shall be tried, neither the one or the other, or part of either, will be found to be my enemy.

"But as Fame is subtle, so it is often and especially in accusations, false; therefore the House of Commons have not wronged me: yet I am confident it will at length be found that Common Fame hath abused both them and me.

"I presume the House of Commons have proceeded against me out of an hearty and zealous affection to do their King and country service, and I hope, out of Christian charity to punish and amend my faults (if Fame could have proved them), and not to envy my reputation or destroy my fortune. I shall never call such proceedings wrong, if seeking to cure any errors, give me opportunity to clear and publish my innocence. For the State itself I have little to say, it is but a little, I will not rouse your

Lordships' patience. I was born and bred in it, I owe it myself; I have been raised to honours and fame in it (I truly confess) beyond my merits; what I wanted in sufficiency and experience for the service of it, I have endeavoured to supply by care and industry. And could there be the least alienation hereafter in my heart from the service of the State, for my King that hath passed, I should be the ungratefulest man living; should but such a thought stain my heart I should be content it were let blood. If my posterity should not inherit the same fidelity, I should desire an inversion in the course of nature, and be glad to see them earthed before me."

The defence that then followed this tactful speech, in which pride was mingled with humility, and contempt with charity, was not so long in its answers as the impeachment in its accusations, yet replied to each article in order.

Regarding plurality of offices, he confessed that by the generosity of two Kings he had received many honours, freely bestowed without his seeking them. And to the present King, he would "readily lay down at his Royal feet not only his places and offices, but his whole fortunes and his life to do him service."

As for his office at the Admiralty, this was made freely without any contract or bargain with the late admiral, though afterwards, "voluntarily and freely, and as an argument of his whole respect for so honourable a predecessor," he had given a present of three thousand pounds to him, the Earl of Nottingham's estate not being great. Upon taking up his office, Buckingham was careful of his duty, and would not rely on his own judgment, but besought his late Majesty to appoint a commission of fit and able persons for the affairs of the Navy, which commission was granted, and he had never done anything of moment without the advice of his commissioners.

He had bought the wardenship of the Cinque Ports from Lord Zouch, not for the sake of private gain (there being a pecuniary advantage attaching to his position), but because many inconveniences arose at the Admiralty by the separate jurisdiction of the Cinque Ports. Lord Zouch would not release the office without a consideration, and for the sake of the efficiency of the Navy, he agreed to give him one thousand pounds in money, and five hundred a year, this sum having been offered to that lord by the late Duke of Richmond.

Referring to the accusation as to not guarding the Channel from pirates and enemies, he pointed out that during his charge over the Admiralty there had always been a strong fleet for the protection of the shore and shipping, and he had constantly consulted the Commissioners of the Admiralty, as well as the Privy Council, and that notwithstanding the fortunes of war, in which some losses must happen, and disastrous storms, the fleet had inflicted severe losses on the enemy.

With reference to the charge of unjustly seizing the ships of a friendly power, he declared that he had acted according to the resolution of the King's judges and advocates, after a careful inquiry, who had based their opinion upon evidence that the vessels were laden with Spanish goods, and could therefore be justly seized as prizes. In making reprisals, the French had not acted in a legal manner.

Touching the charge of extorting ten thousand pounds from the East India Company, the Duke protested that he had information given him by a principal member of their own company, of prizes seized from the Portuguese in the East Indies, and that according to him a large part was due to the King, and to the Duke as admiral. Whereupon directions were given for a legal prosecution in the Court of Admiralty.

His answer about the ships lent to the King of France, and used against Rochelle, was a repetition of his previous speech to the conference of both Houses. The ships had been lent, not for an attack upon Rochelle, but against Genoa. "And when his Majesty did find that, beyond his intention, and contrary to the faithful promises of the French they were so misemployed, he found himself bound in honour to intercede with the most Christian King, his good Brother, for the peace of that town and of the Religion, lest his Majesty's honour might otherwise suffer: which intercession his Majesty did so sedulously, and successfully pursue, that the town and the Religion there do, and will, acknowledge the fruits thereof."

As for seeking honours and places, he utterly denied the charge. With reference especially to the Earl of Middlesex, who was said to have paid him six thousand pounds for the Mastership of the Wards, he could prove that this sum had afterwards been given by the Earl to his late Majesty, who bestowed it upon Sir Henry Mildmay, "without the Duke's privity, and

he had it and enjoyed it, and no penny thereof came to the said Duke, or to his use."

Coming now to the accusation of procuring honours for his kindred, he admitted that his late Majesty, having honoured the Duke himself with many titles and dignities, did also think fit to honour those who were equal in blood with him, and also to ennoble their mother who was the stock that bore them. Buckingham had not asked for these bounties, "but if it were true that the Duke had procured honours for those who are so near and dear unto him, the law of nature, and the King's royal favour, he hopeth, will plead his excuse; and he rather believeth he were unworthy to be condemned in the opinion of all generous minds, if, being in such favour with his master, he had minded only his own advancement, and had neglected those who were nearest unto him."

Now, coming to the most serious charge of all, that he had intercepted and misapplied the King's revenue for his own private purposes, he would prove by a schedule of money received and spent that the truth was otherwise. He had upon several occasions disposed of divers sums of money of his late Majesty and of his present Majesty, by their private directions, in the service of the State, and afterwards he had received "releases" discharging him from those debts.

Lastly, the Impeachment had accused him of "transcendent presumption" in giving physic to the King. Buckingham answered that he did neither procure nor apply the plaster or posset-drink, nor was present when the same were first taken or applied. The King, hearing that the Earl of Warwick's physician had administered these things to Buckingham when he was sick, asked the Duke to send for them. Buckingham delayed, upon which James sent for John Baker, the Duke's servant, and with his own mouth commanded him to fetch them. Upon this Buckingham begged the King not to make use of the medicine unless advised by his physicians, and until it had been tried upon one of his servants of the bedchamber who was suffering from ague. This the King promised to do, and the Duke then went to London. During his absence, the plaster and posset were brought and applied by the King's own command.

"At the Duke's return, his Majesty was in taking of the posset-drink, and the King then commanded the Duke to give

it him, which he did in the presence of some of the King's physicians, they then no ways seeming to dislike it, the same drink being first tasted of by some of them, and divers others in the King's bedchamber. And he thinketh this was the second time the King took it. Afterwards, when the King grew worse than before, the Duke heard a rumour as if this physic had done the King hurt, and that the Duke had ministered that physic to him without advice. The Duke acquainted the King therewith, to whom the King with much discontent answered thus : '*They are worse than Devils that say it.*'"

It has been admitted by most modern historians, though not by those popular writers who have adopted the old prejudices against Buckingham without weighing the evidence, that this answer to the Impeachment was sincere, truthful, and reasonable, whereas the charges in the Impeachment itself were, in their details, based upon insufficient knowledge and exaggerated by passion. But the Commons were not to be convinced against their resolute opinion that Buckingham was the author of the nation's misery, and when the King now peremptorily requested them to get to business and vote the supplies he so urgently needed for the service of the State, they boldly declared that a Remonstrance would precede supply. In this Remonstrance they put on one side all details and specific charges, believing that beyond such matters he was an enemy to both Church and State.

"Unless we would betray our own duties to your Majesty," they said, "and those for whom we are trusted, we cannot but express our infinite grief that he should have so great power and interest in your primary affections, and under your Majesty wholly, in a manner, to engross to himself the administration of your affairs of the kingdom, which by that means is drawn into a condition most miserable and hazardous. . . . We protest to your Majesty and to the whole world, that until this great person be removed from intermeddling with the great affairs of State, we are out of hope of any good success, and do fear that any money that we shall and can give, will, through his misemployment, be turned rather to the hurt and prejudice of this your kingdom than otherwise, as by lamentable experience we have found, in those large supplies we have formerly and lately given."

This proposed Remonstrance was, in the opinion of Charles, and not unjustly, an attack not only upon Buckingham, but upon the very foundations of his own constitutional authority. They had abandoned their impeachment, and without waiting for Buckingham's trial by his peers, in which he would have been pronounced innocent or guilty according to legal evidence, now demanded that the King should dismiss his Minister, though Buckingham had acted with his full authority and advice. The pride of a King would not suffer such dictation from the Commons, and Charles found his patience exhausted. He gave notice of his intention to dissolve Parliament, and when the House of Lords petitioned him respectfully to postpone his decision in view of the unsettled condition of the country, he answered angrily, "Not a minute." To the Commons he addressed a stern rebuke for having, contrary to his repeated desires, delayed the necessary business of the State and the Votes of Supply, in order to discuss grievances and to bring false charges ; and on June 15th of the year 1626, a Parliament which had shown such an aggressive and democratic spirit was formally dissolved.

CHAPTER XII

THE QUARREL WITH FRANCE

IN dissolving Parliament, Charles had played the trump card which is always in the hands of Kings (though not always wise to play), and had scored a trick against the Commons by effectually preventing their impeachment against the Duke. Buckingham himself was not altogether pleased with this action, because, in his sublime self-confidence, he had regarded the public trial as an opportunity for clearing his honour against popular slander, and was now resolved to try his case in the Star Chamber Court, where he would certainly be acquitted by the judges; but this fell through, owing to the refusal of Eliot and his colleagues to give evidence before this tribunal, declaring that they had acted only on behalf of the Commons, and had had no right or knowledge to speak outside the House of Parliament.

The Duke's position, however, was now unassailed, and even stronger than before, because it was evident to all men that Charles would support him to the uttermost and in the face of all public clamour. Even Pembroke, who had shown independence of his greatness and, sometimes, opposition to his power, now acknowledged his victory over the Commons, by consenting to a family alliance. Buckingham's daughter, the little Lady Mary, was affianced to the young son of Pembroke's brother, Montgomery, and Buckingham further secured the nobility to his side by causing several peers who had supported him in the last session of Parliament to be raised to the Privy Council.

At York House he reigned now in an almost kingly magnificence, and notwithstanding the pressure of public work upon him, found time for great hospitality. Among those whom he feasted and entertained were the Vice-Chancellor and heads of



WILLIAM HERBERT, EARL OF PEMBROKE
AFTER A PORTRAIT BY VANDYCK

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Colleges of Cambridge, the Masters of Arts, Bachelors, and Proctors, who, on the 12th of July, came in their robes, hoods, habits, and caps, in solemn procession, to confer the Chancellorship upon his Grace. The ceremony was the occasion of much bowing and reverent doffing of hats, and Buckingham, accompanied by other noble lords, listened patiently to long Latin orations, of which the Duke himself certainly understood but little. But he made a gracious speech to them, "and then," says a letter-writer of the period, "they all viewed the Duke's lodgings, and walked in the gardens, where, in one of the cloisters, there was music, and when the tables were set they went to supper."

Immediately after the dissolution of Parliament a strange phenomenon occurred on the Thames, just by the water-stairs at York Gate, which was the subject of much curious comment at the time, and seemed to some good people a portent of evil, and an ill omen for the Duke.

"Yesterday," writes a friend of the Rev. Joseph Mead, who sends a copy of the letter to Sir Martin Stuteville, "being Monday, we beheld a strange spectacle on the Thames, for in the great storm of thunder and lightning and hail, about three o'clock in the afternoon, the water began to be much troubled hard by the garden in Lambeth parish, over against Sir H. Fiennes' stairs. . . . Presently the water, very much rarified like a mist, began to rise into the form of a circle of thirty yards' compass at ten feet high. The inside was hollow and white with froth; without there was a lett of water, much condensed, and very black. This whirlwind of water (as those that will be wise call it, for you must not say it is prodigious) ran very impetuously down the water as far as the point, then took her course, crossing the water, and beat itself amain against the walls of York House garden, at the very place where the Duke is building a pair of new stairs close by that house. Therewith beating, it broke itself, a thick smoke, like that of a brewer's chimney, ascending from it as high as a man could discern. All this time, the weather being very black, there appeared right over above it, as the beholders thought, a very bright cloud, to the amazement of Whitehall and many very great courtiers, who beheld it out of their windows, as did hundreds more. During the storm, the wall of St. Andrew's Church in Holborn was

beaten down, and many of the coffins of the dead, which lay there buried, discovered. It was not done by a thunderbolt, but, howsoever, the wall was very strong."

York House was the most magnificent private palace in London, and the Duke had spent great sums of money upon its adornment. Like Charles himself, he was a great patron of art, and that curious person, Balthazar Gerbier, his painter, confidential agent, and slavish flatterer, waxes warm with enthusiasm over the great collection of which he was the guardian.

"Some times," he wrote to his patron, "when I am contemplating the treasure of rarities which your Excellency has in so short a time amassed, I cannot but feel astonished in the midst of my joy. For out of all the amateurs, and princes, and kings, there is not one who has collected in forty years as many pictures as your Excellency has collected in five. Let enemies and people ignorant of paintings say what they will, they cannot deny that pictures are noble ornaments, a delightful amusement, and histories that one may read without fatigue. Our pictures, if they were to be sold a century after our death, would sell for good cash, and for three times more than they cost. I wish I could only live a century, if they were sold, to be able to laugh at these facetious folk, who say it is money cast away for baubles and shadows. I know *they* will be pictures still when those ignorants will be less than shadows."

Balthazar Gerbier would not have had to live a century to see those pictures sold. Upon the Duke's death, some of them were bought by the King, the Earl of Northumberland, and Lord Montague; and afterwards Buckingham's son, the eccentric and spendthrift second Duke, dispersed the whole collection. An Antwerp dealer bought some of them, but the majority were purchased by the Archduke Leopold, who added them to his own noble collection at the Castle of Prague. For one of these pictures, the famous "Ecce Homo" by Titian, which introduced the portraits of the Pope, the Emperor Charles V., and "Soliman the Magnificent," which was among those bought by Leopold, our friend George, the first Duke, was offered £7000 in money, or land of the same value, by Thomas, Earl of Arundel.

Many of the pictures had been collected by Peter Paul Rubens, with whom Buckingham was very friendly, and by Sir

Henry Wotton when ambassador at Venice. Among them were nineteen by Titian, seventeen by Tintoretto, twenty-one by Bassano, three by Julio Romano, two by Giorgione, thirteen by Paul Veronese, eight by Palma, three by Guido, thirteen by Rubens, three by Leonardo da Vinci, two by Correggio, and three by Raphael, "besides other and esteemed masters." *

But Gerbier himself was the chief agent for the purchase of the Duke's pictures and art treasures, and made many journeys on the Continent to bargain for old masters and ancient sculpture, with noble dealers. In November of 1624 he set out on one of these expeditions through France and Italy, and, writing from Boulogne, gives his master an account of the good hopes he had of bringing back a great cargo of precious things.

"I mentioned in my former letter of Sir James Arthur how," he writes, "the large and rare paintings in possession of a person called President Chevallier, who has also some antique heads in marble and bronze, the whole neither to be sold nor to be given away without some scheme ; but I have sworn to myself, as I did about the Prelate of Venice, that we must have them, or I lack invention, for as they are the ornament of a handsome house in France, they must be jewels at York House. These paintings and these heads, five thousand pounds sterling in tapestry, rich with gold and silver and silk, and made after a pattern of Raphael's, and one hundred and fifty thousand francs in cash, which make fifteen thousand pounds sterling, are within the centre and circumference of this business."

It seems from Gerbier's account that there was something rather crooked in "this business," and that the sale of the pictures depended upon Buckingham's obtaining a pardon for a French official who had been guilty of fraud. Gerbier flourished his master's virtue in the face of the rogues concerned, and declared that the Duke was "an enemy of all that is base and low, more especially avoiding the having his eye or his hand in the direction of lines which are not perpendicular, that is to say, meddling with any affair unjust or contemptible, much less would he be concerned in anything that was mercenary." At the same time, he hints to "his sweet lord and more than father," that if he does the favour asked : "these pictures will come into our hands with all the rest."

* Catalogue of Buckingham's Pictures, by Brian Fairfax.

The zealous Frenchman hoped to find many good things at Rome, and in the mean time he writes, "During the time I have been in Paris, I have not passed one hour without searching after some rarity ; and I should have stayed there but four days, had it not been, as I thought, very necessary that I should find out all that there is in Paris ; and I never could have thought that they had so many rare things in France, all which are to come into your hands at your happy arrival.* I beg your Excellency yet to read the other sheet, and you will see there these rare pictures of Michael Angelo Raphael. It is, my lord, because since my last I have found at the house of the Bishop of Paris two of the most rare pictures that can be. The first is a St. Francis, a good-sized painting from the hand of the Cavalier Ballion, as good as Michael Angelo Carajoago ; and the other a picture of our Lady by Raphael, which is repainted by some devil who I trust was hanged ; but still it is lovely, and the drawing is so fine, that it is worth a thousand crowns. There is another picture of Michael Angelo Bonna-rotta ; but that should be seen kneeling, for it is a Crucifixion with the Virgin and St. John—the most Divine thing in the world. I have been such an idolater as to kiss it three times, for there is nothing that can be more perfect. It is a miniature. I have a hundred thousand things to say, but I offend too much in trespassing so long upon your patience. I have met with a most beautiful piece of Tintoret, of a Danae, a naked figure, the most beautiful, that flint as cold as ice might fall in love with it. I have given twenty crowns in hand ; it costs, with another head of Titian, sixty pounds sterling. I have given also twenty crowns in hand for the Gorgon's head ; it costs two hundred crowns. I have not yet paid for them, because I was not willing to draw bills until I knew how much I should employ at Paris, which I shall know when I leave. But, my lord, after your Excellency shall have made a large collection, I beg of you to attack Monsieur de Montmorency, for he has the most beautiful statues that can be spoken of ; that is to say, Two Slaves by Michael Angelo, and some others. He is so liberal that he will not refuse them. I beg of you to mention it to Monsieur de Fiat,† for perhaps he has some friends about him. . . . The

* This was written before Buckingham's journey to bring back Henrietta Maria.

† The new French Ambassador in England. The name is generally spelt D'Effiat.

picture of the Secretary of Titian I send by the bearer, to be delivered at York House to my father-in-law. It is a jewel."

Gerbier was so much impressed by what he saw in France that it filled him with a desire to see York House equally magnificent. He begs the Duke to ask his lady to furnish the palace in London as well as she can. "For the love of Paul Veronese," he says, "be pleased to dress the walls of the gallery: poor blank walls they will die of cold this winter!"

So the little Frenchman goes on, fired with enthusiasm for his business of picture-dealer to the great Duke; and though one may smile at his mode of expression, his letters are not without interest as revealing his master's own magnificence as an art patron.

Buckingham was not only the patron of art, but a collector of many rare treasures offered to him by connoisseurs. When he went on his mission to the States of Holland he bought a library of Arabic manuscripts, collected by the scholar Erpinus, which the Duke afterwards bequeathed to the University of Cambridge.* But enough space has been given to this side of his character, and it is necessary to return to the more serious events of history.

The increasingly strained relations between England and France, owing to the disinclination of the French Government to fulfil their promises of active support against Spain and Austria, as well as the King's desire to show his zeal for the Protestant faith, gave Charles an excuse for ridding his Court of the French attendants on the Queen, who since their coming to England had been a source of continual irritation in his domestic life. He took Buckingham into his counsels, and they decided upon a wholesale eviction of all those French priests and servants whose places about the Queen had been an essential part of the marriage treaty.

Whatever our sympathy may be towards the old faith, and however sternly it may be laid down that a solemn promise should not be lightly broken, it must be admitted that Charles had some justification for his passionate prejudice against these strangers at his Court. They seem to have been a turbulent and intolerant crew, adopting an aggressive attitude, and surrounding the Queen as though she and they were a little band

* Catalogue of Buckingham's Pictures by Brian Fairfax.

of martyrs in a nation of barbarians. The Queen herself was too apt to play into their hands, and gave the impression to her Court that her only pleasure was to retire to the company of her own faith and nation. Doubtless this behaviour was absurdly exaggerated by the Puritans about the Court, who were ready to find any stick to beat a "Papist" with, and many stupid and scandalous stories were spread about, and firmly believed by the Protestant public. In a letter from a certain Mr. Pory to Mead, the clergyman, it is solemnly set down that "no longer ago than upon St. James's Day last those hypocritical dogs made the poor queen walk afoot (some add barefoot) from her house at St. James's to the gallows at Tyburn, thereby to honour the saint of the day in visiting that holy place, where so many martyrs forsooth had shed their blood in defence of the Catholic cause." This is a beautiful example of that lying jade rumour, and is founded on nothing more terrible than a sudden whim of the young Queen to take a walk to the spots which naturally had sacred associations for any Catholic. "Some add barefoot"—so does slander touch up a tale! Then goes on Mr. Pory: "Had they not also made her dabble in the dirt, in a foul morning, from Somerset House to St. James's, her luciferian confessor riding along by her in his coach? Yea, they have made her to go barefoot, to spin, to cut her meat out of dishes, to wait at the table, to serve her servants, with many other ridiculous and absurd penances; and if they dare thus insult over the daughter, sister, and wife of so great Kings, what slavery would they not make us the people to undergo?"

Thus Protestant prejudice peered through darkened spectacles and saw everything black. Charles himself took offence at the most innocent diversions of these French folk, and his anger blazed out when going to the private apartments of his Queen one day he found her attendants "dancing and curvetting in her presence." Taking Henrietta by the hand, he led her to a private chamber, and locked himself in with her, no doubt to give the poor child—she was scarcely a woman yet—a marital lecture upon her giddiness.

Then Lord Conway was instructed to inform the French Bishop and his clergy that they must pack up and depart from the kingdom without delay. The Bishop protested that he was

an ambassador, and would not go until he was recalled by the King, his master. To this Conway answered plainly that if he did not go quickly there would be no scruple in putting him out by force.

Then, having given this ultimatum to the priests, Conway, attended by the Comptroller and Treasurer of the Household, suddenly appeared before the Queen's gentlemen and waiting women at Whitehall, where he informed them that it was His Majesty's pleasure that they should instantly depart for Somerset House, there to await his final instructions. A noisy and painful scene took place. The Queen's women squealed and howled at the command to leave their beloved mistress. The gentlemen-in-waiting swore they would rather die than desert their duty. But Lord Conway, having the King's full authority, was quite resolute to fulfil his instructions to the letter, and the Yeomen of the Guard were called in to evict the foreigners.

The poor Queen had been locked into her chamber by the King during this distressing scene, and her anger at being robbed of her people was so great that she tore her hair, and dashed her little hand through the window of her room.

That evening Charles, very pale and determined, appeared before the weeping and angry crowd of French attendants, who were now huddled together at Somerset House. He declared that his domestic happiness had been embittered by the malicious behaviour of certain persons among them, though he would mention no names, and that it was past endurance. He had no choice but to order their instant departure from the kingdom, but he should see that they did not suffer personal loss by his decision, and he had already ordered his Treasurer to pay each of them handsomely for their year's service.

But the French desperately clung to their posts, and, according to Mr. Pory, quoted before in these pages, clung also with greedy hands to every article of dress and to every jewel of the Queen's which they could find at Somerset House, claiming them as their perquisites. A month passed, and still they remained in London, so that his Majesty's patience was now quite spent. He wrote a peremptory letter to Buckingham, from the tone of which it seems that he regarded the Duke as having been remiss in executing his wishes.

"STEENIE,

"I have received your letter by Dic Græme ; this is my answer :—I command you to send all the French away to-morrow out of the town, if you can by fair means (but stick not long in disputing) otherwise force them away, driving them away like so many wild beasts until you have shipped them, and so the devil go with them. Let me have no answer but of the performance of my command. So I rest,

"Your faithful, constant, loving friend,

"CHARLES REX

"Oaking, the 7th of August, 1626"

Buckingham did not delay in the execution of these stringent orders. The captain of the guard, with his yeomen, accompanied by heralds and trumpeters, marched to Somerset House and proclaimed before the gate, where some forty of the King's coaches stood ready to convey the foreigners to Dover, that if his Majesty's pleasure was not speedily obeyed in a peaceable manner, force would be used to eject them, "which news, as soon as the French heard their courage came down, and they yielded, to be gone next tide."

Charles appointed the Countess of Buckingham, her daughter the Countess of Denbigh, Hay's wife, the Countess of Carlisle, and the Marchioness of Hamilton, to the Queen's bedchamber, but poor Henrietta Maria, sadly distressed by the eviction of her French people, remained in the sulks for some time, and was very cool to her husband, who had, she thought, so broken his faith with her.

When the news reached Louis in France he was very angry, and protested that his sister was being treated with deliberate cruelty. He immediately despatched the Marquis de Bassompierre as an ambassador extraordinary to represent his views to Charles, and to report upon the political situation in England.

Bassompierre was an able man, without bigotry, and with an even temper and common sense which enabled him to see both sides of a delicate situation. But upon his arrival in England he found the King so incensed against his Government that he did not trouble to receive him with the ordinary courtesy due to the ambassador of a friendly power. The story of his embassy, as told in his own memoirs, is extraordinarily interesting to

students of this period, and gives many vivid details of society in the early days of the reign. It also gives account of many meetings with Buckingham, in which the character and life of the Duke are revealed in an intimate way. He complains that upon his arrival he was neither lodged nor entertained at the King's expense, though, as he had money in his purse, this did not prevent him being "well lodged, furnished and accommodated." That evening, after he had supped, a messenger came to tell him that some one was inquiring for him. It was none other than the Duke of Buckingham, accompanied by Montagu, and "without flambeaux," who desired to be introduced into his room by a private door.

Bassompierre, knowing that the Duke had been at Hampton Court with the King, was much surprised to see him.

"He began by making many complaints against France, then against me with respect to certain persons; to which I answered as best I could, and then made those of France against England, which he also excused in the best manner he could, and then promised me all manner of assistance, and I also returned ample offers of my service to him. He begged me not to tell that he had been to see me, because he had done it without the King's knowledge, which I do not believe."

On the following night Bassompierre dined with the Duke at York House, the splendour of which filled him with admiration. "It is extremely fine, and was the most richly fitted up than any other I saw." Buckingham for the time being was gracious, "and," says the ambassador in his diary, "we parted very good friends."

In the morning Sir Lewis Lewknor, the master of ceremonies, came to him from the King with the command that he should send back to France Father Sancy of the Oratory, whom he had brought over with him. Bassompierre absolutely refused, and told Lewknor very resolutely that the King had nothing to do with his household arrangements, and that if he was not agreeable to his Majesty he would leave his kingdom and return to his master. A little while after the Duke of Buckingham and the Earls of Dorset and Salisbury came to dine with him, and he took the opportunity of complaining of the King's unreasonable demand. But after dinner the Earl of Montgomery, now Lord Chamberlain, called and repeated the

King's instructions, to which Bassompierre replied as he had done to Lewknor.

On Sunday James Hay, Earl of Carlisle, came with the King's coaches to take him to Hampton Court, where he was served "with a handsome collation." Then a curious scene took place, in which Buckingham played a characteristic part of affability alternating with arrogance, and with offers of friendship accompanied by threats. It is best told by Bassompierre himself. "The Duke of Buckingham came to introduce me to the audience, and told me that the King desired to know beforehand what I purposed saying to him, and that he (the King) would not have me speak to him about any business. I said to him that the King should know what I had to say to him from my own mouth, and that it was not the custom to limit an ambassador. . . .

"He (the Duke) swore vehemently to me, that he told me the truth, and that he had not been able to induce the King to see me otherwise; begging of me even to suggest some expedient, and that I would oblige him. I (who saw that I was going to receive this affront, and that he asked me to assist him with my advice, and to avoid the one, and to insinuate myself more and more into his good graces by the other) told him, that I could not in any manner whatsoever do anything but what was prescribed to me by my master; but that, since, as my friend, he asked my advice as to some expedient, I told him that it depended on the King to give or to take away, to shorten or to lengthen the audience in what manner he would, and that he might (after having allowed me to make him my bow, and received, with the King's letters, my first compliments, when I should come to open to him the occasion of my coming) interrupt me, and say, 'Sir, you are come from London, and you have to return thither; it is late; this matter requires a longer time than I could now give you. I shall send for you one of these days at an earlier hour, and we will confer about it at our leisure in a private audience. In the meanwhile I shall satisfy myself with having seen you, and heard of the King, my brother-in-law, and the Queen, my mother-in-law, and I will not delay the impatience which the Queen, my wife, has to hear of them also from you.' Upon which I shall take my leave of him to go make my bow to the Queen.

"After I had told him this, the Duke embraced me and said, 'You know more of these things than me; I have offered you my assistance in the affair you are come to negotiate, but now I recall the promise I gave you, for you can do very well without me'; and so left me, laughing, to go and tell the King this expedient, who accepted it, and punctually observed it.

"The Duke returned to introduce me to the audience, and the Earl of Carlisle walked behind him. I found the King on a stage raised two steps, the Queen and he in two chairs, who rose at the first bow I made them on coming in. The company was magnificent, and the order exquisite. I made my compliment to the King, gave him my letters, and after having said my words of civility, as I was proceeding to those of business, he interrupted me in the same form I had proposed to the Duke. I then saw the Queen, to whom I said little, because she told me that the King had given her leave to go to London, where she could see me at leisure. Then I withdrew. Then the dukes and principal lords came to conduct me to my coach; and, as the Duke was talking to me expressly to give the secretary time to catch me, the said secretary arrived, who told me that the King informed me, that although he had promised me a private audience he would not give me one until I should send back Father Sancy to France; as he had before desired me to do three times without effect, at which his Majesty felt himself offended. I answered that, if it were consistent with either my duty or decency to obey him, I should have done so at the first word, and that I had no other answers to give than in conformity to those I had already given, with which I thought he ought to be satisfied; and that his Majesty should content himself with the respect which I paid him, of keeping shut up in my house one of my domestics, who was neither guilty, nor condemned, nor accused; who, I could promise, should neither act, nor speak, nor even show himself either at Court or in the city of London, but remain in my own house while I should be there, and not leave it before I myself did; which I will do to-morrow, if he orders it; and, if he will not give me an audience, I shall send to the King my master to know what he pleases I should ask after that refusal; who will not, in my opinion, allow me to grow old in England, waiting till the King takes a fancy, or finds leisure to hear me.

"Which I said loud enough, and not at all moved, in order that the bystanders might hear me. I then expressed more resentment towards the Duke, whom I begged to let me hear no more of this affair, about which I had made up my mind, unless they would give me an order to leave London and the island directly, which I should receive with joy : and upon that I left the company with the Earl of Carlisle and Montague, who brought me back to London and stopped to sup with me."

Bassompierre's sturdiness had its effect on the King and Buckingham, and they began to realize that it would be better to make a friend than enemy of him. The Duke invited him to dinner again at York House, and finally Montague came with a message from Buckingham that although the ambassador still kept Father Sancy with him the King was willing to give him an audience on the next day, which was Thursday, the 15th. Accordingly the Earl of Bridgewater came with the Royal coaches and drove with him to Hampton Court. Here he was received by the Duke, who showed him into a gallery, where Charles was waiting for him. A long interview took place, in which there was much heated discussion.

"Charles," says Bassompierre, "put himself into a great passion, and I, without losing my respect to him, replied to him in such wise that at last yielding him something he conceded a great deal to me. I witnessed there an instance of great boldness, not to say impudence, of the Duke of Boukinham, which was, that when he saw us the most warmed, he ran up suddenly and threw himself between the King and me, saying, 'I am come to keep the peace between you two.' Upon which I took off my hat, and as long as he staid with us I would not put it on again, notwithstanding all the intreaties of the King and of himself to do so ; but when he went I put it on without the King's desiring me. When I had done, and that the Duke could speak to me, he asked me why I would not put on my hat while he was by, and that I did so so freely when he was gone. I answered that I had done it to do him honour, because *he* was not covered, and that *I* should have been, which I could not suffer ; for which he was much pleased with me, and often mentioned it in my praise. But I had also another reason for doing so, which was, that it was no longer an audience, but a private conversation, since he had interrupted us, by coming in,

as a third, upon us. After my last audience was over, the King brought me through several galleries to the Queen's apartments, where he left me, and I her, after a long conversation ; and I was brought back to London by the same Earl of Britswater."

All the influence of the Court was now brought to bear on the ambassador in order that he might represent the religious and domestic difficulties, which led to the repulsion of the Queen's attendants, in a friendly way to the French King. The Duke called on him constantly (and brought him to Somerset House for informal discussion) ; all the great gentlemen of the Court, the Earls of Pembroke, Montgomery, Carlisle, Holland, and Bridgewater, the Marquis of Hamilton, Lord Conway, Sir George Goring, and Sir Dudley Carleton, made amends for the coolness of his first reception by every kind of civility and hospitality. Charles even condescended to discuss his domestic troubles with him, and after a little scene, in which the Queen had openly quarrelled with her husband, the King took the ambassador into a private chamber and opened his heart to him, complaining of his wife's conduct. Bassompierre was not loth to repay these courtesies and confidences by using his influence with the Queen. He recognized that there had been faults as well as grievances on both sides, and in a private conference with her he induced her to see that she had been wrong in surrounding herself so closely with her own people, so that she had established, as it were, a foreign camp in the heart of the English Court. He had more difficulty in persuading her that Buckingham was not her personal enemy, but his tactfulness eventually succeeded even in this. Under the date of Sunday, the 25th, he writes in his diary : "Then I went for the Duke, whom I took to the Queen's, who made his peace with her, which I had brought about with infinite trouble. The King came in afterwards, and he also was reconciled with her and caressed her very much, and thanked me for having reconciled the Duke and his wife—then took me to his chamber, where he showed me his jewels, which are very fine."

The trouble was not at an end, for Henrietta Maria's temper was uncertain, and Buckingham's behaviour still rankled. In the ambassador's diary we find the barometer of her moods rising and falling. On Monday, the 26th, he writes : "I went to the Queen at Somerset [House] and fell out with her." On

Wednesday, the 28th, he writes again: "I went to see the Queen at Somerset, with whom I made it up." But on the following Monday, after some conversation with the Duke, he returned to the Queen with a report of what had been said, "at which she was uneasy and we parted on bad terms."

On Tuesday he records a pleasant trait in Buckingham's character. "The Duke," he writes, "brought his little daughter to my house as a mark of reconciliation." This was the little Lady Mary, of whom he was passionately fond, and that he was in the habit of taking her about with him, even when he was in the midst of diplomatic affairs of such delicacy and difficulty, shows his real good nature and affection. Eventually Bassompierre was brought before the Privy Council, to whom he spoke for upwards of an hour on the subject of the Queen's rights regarding [the liberty of worship and personal attendance by those of her own faith. He also took occasion to repudiate the absurd story about the penitential journey to Tyburn, and in no hesitating way reminded the King and Council of the pledges given to France of religious toleration in the marriage treaty. Having spoken thus "with great vehemence and better to my own liking than I had ever spoken in my life," the ambassador visited the Queen and reported the substance of his address, "at which she was much obliged." Later in the day Buckingham sent word that all in the Council who could speak French would call upon him on the following morning, and that he might entertain hopes of a favourable conclusion, "for the King had told them that his design was to satisfy the King his brother, and to send back Bassompierre well pleased."

The second conference took place, though Bassompierre was not in an eloquent mood; "for," he says, "either the weather, or my constitution, or the long and vehement reply I had made the other day, had put in me such a state that I had lost my voice."

The Duke having arrived with his company, the discussion began, and Buckingham spoke earnestly of the "mischief" that would ensue if the rupture took place between the two nations, and how agreeable it would be to the King if some means of agreement could be found. The conference went to work at this business, says Bassompierre, "and found no great trouble in it, for they were reasonable, and I was moderate in my demands."



KING CHARLES I AND QUEEN HENRIETTA MARIA
AFTER A PAINTING BY VANDYCK

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ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS.

The greatest difficulty was about the re-establishment of the priests, upon which, however, we at last agreed."

The proposals to which the French ambassador consented were for a few priests to serve in the Queen's private chapel and household, subject to the King's approval and authority. This was perfectly agreeable to Charles, and on the following day he solemnly confirmed the negotiations. Everything now seemed much more cheerful at Court. The King, having set his house in order, was in the best of tempers, and the Queen was prevailed on by the ambassador to forget past grievances, and forgive those who had offended her.

On November 9th there was a public demonstration of this new domestic cheerfulness, when the Queen and a number of courtiers went "into the street called Sheside" [Cheapside] to the Lord Mayor's Show, a ceremony which impressed the ambassador as "the greatest that is made at the reception of any officer in the world." Buckingham, by the Queen's expressed desire, rode in her coach, and afterwards, while the party waited for the procession to pass, the Queen played at primero with the Duke and the Earl of Dorset. In the evening Buckingham took the ambassador to the dinner at the Guildhall, where more than eight hundred persons sat down. The City at least has not changed its ancient customs, and it is curious to think that if the ghost of Bassompierre returned to London on the ninth of November of next year he could, if he passed the policeman at the door, sit in the same hall and see the same ceremonies as on that night in the year 1626.

Buckingham spared no expense in his desire to please the ambassador, and to send him back to France as an emissary of an *entente cordiale*, and on Sunday, the 15th of November, the King took Bassompierre to York House, where, says the ambassador, the Duke gave them "the most magnificent entertainment I ever saw in my life. The King supped at one table with the Queen and me, which was served by a complete *ballet* at each course, with sundry representations, changes of scenery, tables, and music. The Duke waited on the King at table, the Earl of Carlisle on the Queen, and the Earl of Holland on me. After supper the King and me were led into another room, where the assembly was, and one entered it by a kind of turnstile, as in convents, without any confusion, where there

was a magnificent ballet, in which the Duke danced ; and afterwards we set to and danced country dances till four in the morning ; thence we were shown into vaulted apartments, where there were five different collations."

Bassompierre does not describe the details of the masque given at this entertainment, though it was a political moral, prepared by Buckingham, with the assistance of his master of ceremonies, Balthazar Gerbier, and specially addressed to the French ambassador. It represented Marie de Medicis, the Queen-Mother, enthroned in the midst of Neptune's court upon the sea dividing England and France, and welcoming Frederick and Elizabeth of the Palatine, with her three daughters and their husbands, the Kings of England, Spain, and the Prince of Piedmont. It was Buckingham's new ideal of foreign policy—France as the ally of England, the Elector Palatine restored to his throne, and peace with Spain. Buckingham's ideal, alas ! was not more substantial than the pasteboard and tinsel and floating draperies of his actors, and, like the masque, a mockery.

The cost of the banquet at York House was estimated at five or six thousand pounds, and at a time when the Government had an exhausted treasury, and was using unconstitutional means to get money, it was the cause of grumbling among Puritans and politicians. In the alleys around St. Paul's Churchyard, scurrilous squibs aimed at the Duke's greatness and spattered it with filth, and lewd ballads written by drunken poets in low taverns, were to be found in black letter on many a booth. "There is one scurvy book come forth," writes the garrulous Parson Mead, "called *The Devil and the Duke*, for which, on Wednesday, was much inquisition in Paul's Churchyard ;" and the same clergyman, describing the great banquet at York House, says that "some people stick not to prate that his Majesty is in very great favour with the Duke's grace." The tavern-haunters did not lack imagination. In the fumes of Bordeaux wine they saw Buckingham as a scarlet Satan, to whom Charles had sold his soul. The Reverend Mead, who seems to have had some curious correspondents, holds the bottom letter against the fire until it grows brown, and reads a message which is dangerous to leave open on a desk.

"Sir,—Will you believe that the Duke should be carried in his box by six men to St. James's to tennis, and the

King walk by him on foot? It is true. I doubt not but you have heard of the play in Christmas, which was begun again at the Duke's entering, the King having heard one full act. It is true." Verily, methinks he doth protest too much! Liars always have the name of truth upon their lips.

Buckingham did not stoop to whip the mongrels snarling at his heels, or to stop the mouths of slanderers who lurked in dark places. But he had greater cause of trouble and anxiety, and his reputation was to be put to its severest test, and tried not in back alleys, but by the grand jury of the nation.

Bassompierre's mission, with its friendly outcome and interchange of courtesies, had secured to Buckingham a guarantee of peace, and a closer alliance, with France. But while the French ambassador was being feasted at York House and Whitehall the political situation between the two nations was steadily assuming a more dangerous and threatening aspect. English merchant ships were being seized in French waters, and London merchants were clamouring to the Privy Council for letters of marque to defend their vessels, and retaliate against these pirates of a friendly power. Then came news of startling gravity. The Duke of Epemon, Governor of Guienne, who hated Richelieu and his policy of peace with England, seized a fleet of two hundred English and Scottish vessels about to sail from Bordeaux with a full cargo of wine upon which they had already paid duty. It was an open act of war, and Charles, who had been in a state of dreadful indecision, now issued an Order in Council for the seizure of all French vessels in English waters. Short of an actual declaration of war, the peace had been broken between France and England. Yet Buckingham refused to face the facts, or rather, faced them with eyes blinded by extraordinary optimism. He still believed that if he crossed over to Paris with the friendly and moderate-minded Bassompierre, he could win over Louis and Richelieu to his desires. As we have seen, hints had been given to him before that his presence in France would not be tolerated after his conduct during the marriage journey. But now, when he hurried after Bassompierre on his way to Dover, he was with difficulty persuaded by the French ambassador to wait until this proposed embassy had been

submitted to the King his master. That permission was not given, and Bassompierre himself was disgraced upon his return home. Louis, exasperated by the English attitude over Rochelle, was in no mood for conciliation, and repudiated the agreement negotiated by his ambassador regarding the status of Henrietta's household at the English Court.

There is no doubt that this refusal hit Buckingham very hard. His *amour propre* was wounded, as well as his political pride, and it is possible that he covered his humiliation by certain wild and foolish words, which put a different construction on the conduct of the French Government, and gave occasion to the romantic story which is still popularly believed. Biographical writers still affirm that England went to war with France because the Duke of Buckingham, baulked in his desire to see his mistress, the French Queen, vowed to march to the French capital at the head of an English army, and, as a conquering hero, to meet again the woman he loved with all the passion of his impetuous heart.

The story is not less ridiculous because it was commonly believed at the time, and is borne out to some extent by words attributed to the Duke. Clarendon says that he openly declared that "he would see and speak with that lady in spite of the strength and power of France;" and Roger Coke says that on another occasion Buckingham was heard to declare that if he could not enter France peacefully he would force his way to Paris with an army. Madame de Motteville also, writing from the French point of view, says in her *Memoirs* that Buckingham raised a division between the two crowns in order that he might afterwards have an opportunity of returning to France as a peacemaker.

No student of English history can take seriously a story which would have been admirable as an episode in "the Romaunt of the Rose," but is incredible as the cause of war between two modern nations. But we need not discredit the words attributed to the Duke by the Earl of Clarendon. They are very characteristic of Buckingham, for we may decidedly believe that, in private conversation with men like Holland and Carlisle, he may have kept up his romantic pose of passion for the French Queen, and made the foolish vaunt of marching to Paris as a lover and conqueror. He had need

of a good deal of rosy imagination to colour bald and ugly facts, for truly his position as Minister for War, and, as we should now call it, First Lord of the Admiralty, was lamentable and desperate. Apart altogether from the threatened war with France, it was an almost hopeless task to meet his engagements with the Protestant allies in Europe, and to furnish a fleet to carry out his enterprises against Spain.

In dissolving Parliament Charles had in an almost literal sense burnt his boats. Having failed in obtaining the heavy supplies necessary for war, he had to raise money by desperate and dangerous methods. Acting upon bad old precedents, he fell back upon "free gifts," a "forced loan," "tonnage and poundage," and other expedients for extracting money from the nation without Parliamentary authority. He also sold his own gold plate, as a sign that he would not spare the property of the Crown when appealing to the pockets of his people. But none of these methods were successful in raising the enormous sums required. The City, which had been applied to for a loan of £100,000 on the security of the Crown jewels, flatly refused, and only one-fifth of that sum was provided upon strong pressure from the King by certain wealthy aldermen. The "free gift" failed ignominiously. The majority of people applied to either pleaded poverty or boldly declared that they would pay nothing save by the authority of Parliament. The "forced loan" raised a very storm of indignation, and "passive resistance" became the order of the day, not only among Commonsers determined to defend their liberties, but, what was more ominous to the power of the Crown, among noblemen, who were equally inspired by the traditions of the English Constitution as handed down by those barons who had given the Great Charter to the nation. Among the peers who thus stood out against the loan were Essex, Lincoln, Warwick, Clare, Bolingbroke, and Saye. A more dangerous opposition rose in another quarter. The Judges refused to recognize the legality of the loan, and this gave encouragement to the people generally to resist it as an illegal act.

But Charles was not daunted. He was indeed a man deeply in debt, and with heavy responsibilities to meet, who for the sake of temporary relief was prepared to face every risk. He dismissed the Lord Chief Justice, then Sir Randal Crew, and

appointed in his stead Nicholas Hyde, who had shown his zeal for the Court party by drawing up his answers to the impeachment of Buckingham. A vacancy in the office of Chief Justice of the Common Pleas was filled by Sergeant Richardson, who was a kinsman by marriage of the Duke. The loan now became a forced one in the full strength of the word, and the tyranny of King John when he bled his people was hardly more violent than the way in which the officers of Charles I., after centuries in which the liberties of the people had been established by law, proceeded with their business. Buckingham seems to have presided at times over the sittings of the loan commission, and the stories told of his conduct on those occasions, whether true or false, did not increase his popularity.

"Shall I tell you what they talk at London?" writes the Rev. Joseph Mead, whose eager ears heard every tale. "That the Duke should say he would have money if it were in the kingdom. That the French ambassador having gotten an inclination from the King to Parliament to settle the Queen's jointure, the Duke should say to his Majesty, 'By God, Sir, there shall be no Parliament!' Some Londoners which told me this, told me also, that at Hicks's Hall, where some denied to subscribe the loan, the Duke should say, 'Sirrah, take heed what you do. Did you not speak treason at such a time?' The Earl of Dorset, asking a fellow who pleaded he was unable, what a trade he was of, and being answered a tailor, 'Come, come,' saith he, 'one snip will make amends for all,' and other such like, which they say was not wont to be in days of yore."

Buckingham's shoe was the one that pinched most, for he carried upon his shoulders the greatest burden of the Government, which was almost at a standstill for ready money. He was unable to send out the supplies promised for the support of the allies in Denmark, Sweden, and Germany, and at home the Navy was rotting to pieces. The sailors were without their wages, without boots, and almost without food, so that the ragamuffin crews were in a state of mutiny, and deserting at every opportunity. Many of these men found their way to London, and, desperate with hunger and suffering, stormed the offices of the Admiralty, threatened Sir William Russell, the paymaster, that they would pull his house about his ears unless

their wages and arrears were duly paid, and even forced their way into York House and Whitehall. On a Tuesday in December six sea captains entered forcibly into the Duke's chamber at Whitehall as he sat at dinner, and protesting that they had served the King long without pay, which was not the custom of his Majesty's predecessors, nor of any prince in the world besides, supposed that it was all "along of him." "Whereunto his grace replied, asking them if they stood not in awe of the late proclamation which, on pain of hanging, forbade all soldier mariners to come to the Court in troops about any business; to which the captains answered him again, that if they were hanged there were more others to be hanged in their company, and from this proceeded to such uncouth language as his Excellency was fain to yield, and to promise them upon his honour they should very speedily be satisfied."* On another day some sailors on Tower Hill set a boy up on a scaffold to proclaim that the King had promised to pay their wages, and that if that was not done the Duke would lose his head.

Buckingham's naval plans were so disastrously delayed by lack of money to victual the fleets and provide men and munition of war that he was in danger of becoming ridiculous—a thing worse to him than failure. There is a curious conversation reported in a letter from a Mr. Pory to the Rev. Joseph Mead.

"On Wednesday last there was a certain knight that asked the Duke when the fleet would set sail. The Duke answered, 'Within ten days.'—*Kn.*: 'So it hath been said these six months, that the fleet would set sail within fourteen days, and therefore I cannot believe it will be gone within ten days.'—*Du.*: 'If it be not gone within ten days, I will give ten of my teeth.'—*Kn.*: 'One of your houses, my lord, would do me more good than ten of your teeth. I will lay money against one of your houses that the fleet will not be gone by then.'—*Du.*: 'I will lay no wagers.'—*Kn.*: 'I will tell your lordship a reason why the fleet cannot be gone so soon: your victuals are naught, your beer stinks, and those that should go take exception to both.'—*Du.*: 'It is true there are bad victuals and bad beer, but better is provided to put in their place.' In fine, this knight told somebody in my hearing that he did not believe the fleet

* "Court and Times."

would go from the coast of England this year. *O tempora ! O mores !*"

The anonymous knight's prophecy was not fulfilled to the letter, because, as a matter of fact, an English fleet did put to sea in October of 1626 under Lord Willoughby. But Buckingham was haunted by ill luck. The very forces of nature conspired against him, and Willoughby's ships, encountering a great storm in the Bay of Biscay, were so battered about that they struggled home again without having fired a shot at a Spanish ship or a Spanish coast town. This was before the seizure of the home fleet at Bordeaux, and that event, which led to the last grave breach between England and France, was a reprisal for the capture of three ships of Rouen, suspected of being laden with Spanish cargoes, by Buckingham's brother-in-law, the Earl of Denbigh. In the mean time the English shores and the port towns had been called upon to supply a fleet of fifty-six ships, and the City of London had been assessed at twenty ships. This was a fresh cause of grievance against the Government, and some of the maritime shires were hardy enough to dispute the precedent. The City of London had also argued the matter, but, after a severe reprimand from the Council and after long delay, they had eventually furnished the number of vessels demanded.

These were put under the command of Pennington, who had, it will be remembered, been so puzzled by the secret orders and counter-orders regarding the loan-ships at Rochelle. The King himself now instructed Buckingham to send him with his small squadron to attack six ships recently bought by the French King and, according to information, lying in the Havre roads. On the 24th of December the Duke gave these orders to Pennington—

"When you shall come where these ships ride," he wrote, "you are according to your best discretion to give the captains or commanders of them some occasion to fall out with you, and to shoot at you ; and thereupon, presently, with the best force you can make, you are to repulse the assault, and so to set upon them with your own and all the ships of your fleet, and that, having once begun with them, you may be sure, God willing, not to fail to take them, or if they will not yield, to sink or fire them. If because they are but few ships, and, as I am

informed, not well manned, they shall not dare, upon any occasion, to meddle first with you, then you are to take occasion to pick some quarrel with them upon some suspicion of their intent to lie there to colour enemy's goods, or countenance his ships, and to secure or take them, or otherwise to sink and fire them. In which you are, as you see occasion, to make so probable and just a ground for a quarrel as may be, and if you can, to make it their quarrel, not yours. But, howsoever, if you can meet with them you may not fail to take, sink, or fire them." *

Captain Pennington was one of those seamen whom England has never lacked since the British Navy has existed. He was ready to obey orders to the letter, without question, and to take any ships under his flag against any enemy on the high seas. He would put up a good fight as long as his men would serve the guns. So with his sailing orders and the City of London ships, of which he was not proud—being in his sound judgment of timber "very mean things" and with more "land-lubbers" than able seamen—away he went to Havre to do his brisk little job. But once again Buckingham as Lord Admiral had no luck, which even a Nelson needs to give him a chance of victory. The Council had been wrongly informed, and not a French pennon was sighted off Havre. So back came Pennington with the temper of a dog, to confess his failure and to complain bitterly of his bare ships, scarce munition, and inefficient crews. But now the tide of luck, which had been flowing so steadily in an evil direction, did at last seem to turn in our favour. It is true that the forced loan had roused a dangerous resistance in the nation—the Earl of Lincoln was committed to the Tower for scheming against it, and many bold gentlemen, among whom were Wentworth, Pym, and one other named Hampden, who was afterwards to be so famous as the resister of "ship-money"—but the stern measures threatened against these passive resisters had scared the majority of people into submission, and money began to flow in, not furiously but enough to relieve the desperate and immediate poverty of the Council. New ships had also been supplied by the Shires, and Pennington again set forth, with instructions from Buckingham to seize or sink the merchant fleets of France. This time he was more successful. France had practically no warships to

* Domestic State Papers.

defend her trade, and Pennington swept the seas and brought many rich prizes into English ports, which, being promptly sold, provided money to pay the long-deferred wages of the seamen and to supply munitions of war.

In the beginning of the new year, therefore, Buckingham's hopes mounted high, and with every prospect, as he thought, for splendid naval successes, to make amends for all previous misfortunes, resolved to command in person a great fleet for the relief of Rochelle. Yet, with all his optimism, he had grown anxieties, although there was still no formal declaration of war between France and England, the peace had now been broken on both sides, and the proposed expedition to Rochelle would make conciliation impossible. France therefore was added to Spain and Austria among the enemies of England, the two greatest powers in Europe, against whom our own allies, Denmark, the Netherlands, and the German Protestants, under Mansfeld, were at this time almost impotent. The poverty of the English Government without a Parliament voting subsidies now made it impossible for Buckingham to send more than a mean proportion of the money and men promised to King Christian. Charles had offered him jewels, but they were of no more value to him than the glittering pebbles of a sea-beach. Then, by a desperate effort, with the press-gangs at work, Buckingham raised four regiments for service in the Netherlands, under command of Sir Charles Morgans, but they deserted almost as rapidly as they were recruited, and when they were shipped for the Elbe in April of the year 1627, they mustered only a beggarly remnant of 2,472 out of the 6,000 which should have been their full strength. Afterwards they were made up to a total of 5,000 by drafts of men who had refused to pay the forced loan, but these were rapidly thinned down by disease and desertion.

Buckingham, though confident now that with his English fleets he would strike terror into the heart of France, and bring money into the King's treasury by the capture of rich prizes, realized that on the battleground of Europe it would be a forlorn hope to make headway against the combined powers of France, Spain, and Austria. He resolved, therefore, to negotiate secretly with Spain for a treaty of peace. It was a wild idea, and one which, if it leaked out too soon, would endanger his

reputation at home as well as abroad. Private negotiations with the enemy would to private foes smell uncommonly of treason. Indeed, when a whisper of it came to the ears of Lord Conway—he who had been the most subservient flatterer of the Duke—"Judas" was the word he used in his first surprise. Yet there is no reason to suppose that Buckingham took more than the initial steps without the King's knowledge, and, after all, a diplomatic "feeler" towards a treaty with Spain and a general peace in Germany was not in any way dishonourable to the Duke's character, though not creditable to his judgment of the political situation in Europe.

This secret business was strangely handled. It was impossible to communicate direct with Spain on such a matter, after all that had passed, but two intermediaries unsuspected of diplomatic office were made use of. One was Gerbier, the pettifogging court painter of England and Buckingham's confidential agent, the other, great Rubens, the court painter of France. As a Spaniard of renown in Europe, the friend of Philip IV. and his ministers, as well as friendly to Buckingham, who had made his acquaintance in Paris, he was in a position to forward in a private way to the Spanish Government any tentative proposal made by the Duke. Gerbier crossed over to Paris, ostensibly on a mission to purchase pictures and art treasures, but really to confer with the Spanish painter. The only result was that Buckingham's letters came to the hands of Olivares, who, while playing with the Duke through his intermediaries, showed the documents to the French ambassador to Madrid. This was followed by an alliance between France and Spain against England, and Buckingham found that he had been tricked. There was nothing for it, therefore, but to go on with the war at the same ruinous cost of blood and treasure, limited only by the difficulty of obtaining men and money, while pressing forward the great expedition to Rochelle.

Such was the situation which Buckingham had to face in the early part of 1627, and to do him justice it must be admitted that he faced it with immense courage, energy, and optimism.

While Kate, his Duchess, and the Countess, his mother, were going down on their knees to him,* imploring him with tears and passionate entreaties not to carry out his intention to command

* "Court and Times."

the fleet in person, one learns by the letter-writers of the time that they and the public generally were utterly sceptical of his fulfilling this design. But Buckingham, though he swore to his wife, to soothe her, that he would not go, was in desperate earnest, and absorbed himself in the details of preparing a fleet of thirty great ships. At this time, however—that is to say, in the month of March—he suffered a great private grief. His little son, the Earl of Coventry, was taken dangerously ill with brain fever, and the Duke was so seriously perturbed that, in spite of the stress of public business, no one was allowed to see him. A few days later the poor child died, and was buried in Henry VIII.'s chapel. After this sorrowful interruption of his labours, Buckingham plunged again into his work at the Admiralty, and it was at last brought home to the scoffers that he was really serious in his intent to take command of the proposed expedition. Writing to the Rev. Joseph Mead on April 13th, a correspondent says: "The fleet for new service, it is thought, will be ready about a fortnight hence, wherein, it is confidently said, his Grace goes Admiral himself, his cabin and the cabins of his attendants being prepared in the ship. Sir John Watts goes captain, and my Lord High Chamberlain, the Earl of Lindsey, Vice-Admiral. The Duke saith (as it is reported) that before midsummer he will and shall be more honoured and beloved of the Commons than ever the Earl of Essex was. I know none but wish he may perform such a service as might deserve it."

In another letter, dated May 11th:—

"The last week was a great collier-ship pressed to be for his Grace's living and store of provision, and many carpenters at work making stalls for four fat oxen, two milch cows, two goats, and coops for poultry and fowl. His trumpeters go about to knights' and aldermen's houses to take their farewell and have something given them. His horses, which his friends send him, are come in, gallant ones, and bravely furnished. The provisions [warlike stores] which have been already made and still are going out of the Tower, are strong and exceedingly effective. The choicest and well-nigh all the most sufficient men you command in the Kingdom, as well as the most skilful at sea, are to be employed in this service; so that if it should miscarry (which God forbid) many are afraid the loss will be almost

irrecoverable. It is said that his Grace makes a farewell supper to their Majesties, and to-morrow at night is a masque to be at York House."

At that masque, which was of a magnificent character, Buckingham had an allegory performed in which he played the chief part, after him coming Envy, "with divers open-mouthed dogs' heads, representing the people's barking," and the figures of Fame and Truth and others symbolical of the Duke's hopes and virtues. Never, perhaps, had Buckingham's vanity been so publicly displayed as in this theatrical performance before the King and Queen.

Yet in London and in the country his name was being cursed by many wretched men, and by many weeping wives and children. To provide his crews and army, pressgangs were at work, seizing any stalwart fellow who came to their hands. The Domestic State Papers of this time are full of such grim accounts, and of reports of the violence and tumult throughout the kingdom. Many of those pressed revolted in a body and overpowered their guards. Many others made their escape singly, or were rescued by their friends. And those who were taken as prisoners to Plymouth and Portsmouth to man the fleet became an appalling source of anxiety to the naval and military officers, for in many cases these ragged regiments were in actual danger of starvation, and it was often necessary to permit them to plunder the villages through which they passed in order that they might obtain food, in view of the supplies delayed by, or not forthcoming from the authorities.

The Duke himself, having to settle a thousand details of administration, was kept to London longer than he had hoped, and the King went first to Portsmouth and Plymouth, where he displayed great energy in reviewing the troops now assembled there, and in visiting various ships of the fleet, upon which he was royally entertained. On May 31st, Buckingham, however, rode swiftly to Dover, and embarking there sailed then with twenty-seven vessels to the general rendezvous, having made a reconnaissance to discredit a wild story there, causing a panic among the people, that a Spanish Armada was bearing down upon the English coast. After this adventure, Buckingham hurried back to London to conclude his business and give final advice as to the conduct of affairs during his absence. Then

he had a solemn leave-taking of the Privy Council, and on Wednesday, June 13th, of the year 1627, set out at last for Portsmouth. To his wife and family he had said no long farewells, though he loved them. He slipped away from them like a guilty man. For his poor Duchess had no sympathy with this perilous enterprise. On her knees she had begged him not to go, and he, moved, as we cannot doubt, by her passionate grief, had weakly and falsely vowed that he would not take command of the expedition in person. Kate Buckingham no doubt was not right in demanding such a promise from her husband, and Buckingham might well have said with the Elizabethan poet—

"I could not love thee, dear, so much,
Loved I not honour more."

But Kate, though she had outwardly renounced her faith to marry him, clung, it is certain, to the Roman Catholic cause, and it was impossible to her, therefore, to see any righteousness in her husband's mission to rescue the Protestants of Rochelle. But apart from this her passionate love for him filled her with a thousand fears, and she could not forget the agony of his absence in Spain, which, if he went to Rochelle, would be repeated with the additional torture of knowing that his very life was in danger. There is a melancholy and piteous letter from the Duchess, which she sent to her husband at this time, preserved in our State Papers.

"I confess," she wrote, "I did ever fear that you would be caught, for there was no other likelihood after all that show but you must needs go. For my part, I have been a very miserable woman hitherto that never could have you keep at home. But now I will ever look to be so, until some blessed occasion comes to draw you quite from the Court. For there is none more miserable than I am now, and till you leave this life of a courtier, which you have been ever since I knew you, I shall ever think myself unhappy. I am the unfortunatest of all other, that ever when I am with child I must have so much cause of sorrow as to have you go from me, but I never had so great a cause of grief as now I have. God of his mercy give me patience, and if I were sure my soul would be well, I could wish myself to be out of this miserable world, for till then I shall not

be happy. Now I will no more write to hope you do not go, but must betake myself to my prayers for your safe and prosperous journey, which I will not fail to do, and for quick return, but never whilst I live will I trust you again, nor never will put you to your oath for anything again.

"I wonder why you sent me word by Crow * that you would see me shortly to put me in new hopes ; I pray God never woman may love a man as I have done you, that none may feel that which I have done for you.

"Since there is no remedy, but that you must go, I pray God send you gone quickly, that you may be quickly at home again ; and whosoever wished you to this journey, beside yourself, that they may be punished, for it will be a course of a great deal of grief to me. But that is no matter. Now there is no remedy but patience, which God send me ! I pray God send me wise, and not to hurt myself with grieving. Now I am very well, I thank God, and so is Mall. And so I bid you farewell,

"Your poor grieved,

"And obedient wife,

"K. BUCKINGHAM

"I pray give order before you go for the jewels, which I owe you. Burn this, for God's sake. Go not to land, and pity me, for I feel [most miserable] at this time. Be not angry with me for writing these, for my heart is so full I cannot choose, because I did not look for it.

"I would to Jesus that there were any way in the world to put you off this journey with your murderers. If any pains or any suffering of mine could do it, I were a most happy woman ; but you have sent yourself, and made me miserable ; God forgive you for it."

This letter, the only one we have found by Duchess Kate in which there is a note of revolt and rather querulous complaint, hints at domestic troubles of a rather pitiful kind. Although there are later letters from wife to husband which show that Kate had forgiven George for all his waywardness, and that to the end she loved him almost with adoration, we cannot help believing that for a time at least her faith in him

* Sir Sackville Crow, Treasurer of the Navy.

was severely tried, and that she has been painfully awakened to the many faults and weaknesses in the man who had been her hero.

During his absence in Spain, when she had been weary of waiting for his long-delayed return, there had come upon every breeze rumours of scandal tainting to Buckingham's fame. In the chambers of a Court whispers and cruel words are heard by ears not eager to play the eavesdropper, and there are always men and women who find a kind of devil's sport in sticking sharp little arrows into a sensitive heart. It was impossible for Duchess Kate to be quite ignorant of the way in which the Duke had relieved the tedious time in Madrid. But much harder to bear must have been the news of those extraordinary adventures in France, with the Queen, who was so weak in allowing herself to be endangered by the Englishman's passionate advances. What explanation Buckingham had given at home about an amour which had startled the whole world we cannot know or guess. He had bragged about it openly to friends not distinguished by discretion. How did he reconcile it with those protestations of constancy to the beautiful mother of his children?

Often she must have been bitterly perplexed by secrets which he did not share with her. She guessed, with all the brooding jealousy of a fond wife who is the home-bird, that this splendid man of hers had relations with other women, of which she knew nothing but what reached her through chance words and little clues dropped carelessly. For many months now he had been absorbed in political schemes and mysterious intrigues. There was so much in his life unknown to the woman who lay in his bed at night, and she hated the thought that she did not possess all of him, and that his natural candour was now blurred so that she could no longer see clearly into the mirror of his soul.

The Duke's mother was not more ready to give her blessing to his adventure against France. She had the same religious scruples as the Duchess, being now an avowed Roman Catholic, and also the popular clamour against her son, and the distress of the kingdom, had made her lose faith in his wisdom. For the first time, therefore, Buckingham was not supported by that domestic adoration which had surrounded him for years, and

to a man of his genuinely affectionate nature this must have been a real grief as he rode on his way to Portsmouth.

Here, however, the King's friendship and confidence in him, the homage of the fleet to him as Lord Admiral, the farewell feasting on board his flag-ship, the work still to be done before the ships could sail, and the general excitement of thus exercising supreme command over great bodies of men engaged in a great adventure, must have stirred his blood with the joy of life. It must be acknowledged, and will be acknowledged before the story of this enterprise is finished, that Buckingham had many of the qualities that go to make a great soldier or a great seaman. He was no mere puppet in fine clothes, with a handsome face and the heart of a mouse. Before the fleet was under way he showed great activity, and the ability not only to command but to be obeyed. He shipped his men and horses speedily, and then with a guard went up and down Portsmouth to gather in the stragglers. He cashiered one captain for being drunk in the town after every man had been ordered to join his ship, and by court-martial sentenced to be hanged a boatswain who in his cups had jeered at the voyage. This man, however, he pardoned and dismissed, being moved by mercy.

His fleet consisted of five squadrons—his own, as admiral, of twenty-five sail; Lord Harvey's, as vice-admiral, of twenty; and Captain Pennington's, of twenty-five—in all seventy-seven ships. The soldiers on board—they were the sweepings of many towns and villages by his Majesty's pressgangs—amounted to about 5000 foot and 200 horse; but, on the other hand, there were many men belonging to noble families of England among the officers. About one of them, a Colonel Gray, a curious story is told, illustrating the superstition of the time. He had a cabin in the Duke's ship, and Buckingham was on very friendly terms with him. But for some reason or other before the fleet sailed he was transferred to another vessel.

"Will you hear what tale they have in London about this," writes the Rev. Joseph Meade to Sir Martin Stuteville—"viz. that the old countess, solicitous to know what should become of her son, consulted Dr. Lambe" [next year torn to pieces by the populace as a dealer in black art], "who showed her in a glass a big, fat man with a reddish face, brown beard, an iron arm,

and a long dagger, etc., which she presently took to be Colonel Gray, the description in all things fitting him ; and therefore suspected he should kill her son. Hereupon she writes to the Duke, and tells she had such a dream, which much troubled her, and therefore anxiously desires, that either Colonel Gray might not go at all, or be removed into another ship, which was done accordingly."

At last, after an affectionate farewell from the King, and after more troubles than might have daunted the stoutest heart, Buckingham, on Wednesday morning of June 27th, set sail with a fair wind, and on board he turned his face to France.

And not only Charles must have watched those disappearing sails with anxious hope, for with the fleet went the hope of those among the people of England who still cherished the traditions of the past, and who still remembered the great exploits of the Elizabethan seamen, that Buckingham with all his faults would redeem the disasters which of late years had humiliated the spirit of a proud nation.

CHAPTER XIII

THE EXPEDITION TO ROCHELLE

IT was on the evening of July 10th that the English fleet reached the Island of Rhé, opposite Rochelle on the mainland, and when Buckingham signalled to the ships to anchor off St. Martin's, the chief town of the island. He was faced at once by a difficult military problem, and by an extraordinary political situation which further increased that difficulty. He had come to relieve Rochelle. But as yet he did not know whether the Rochellois themselves were willing to be rescued by English forces. Rebels as they were against their own King, it was possible—and afterwards was made clear—that they would hesitate in availing themselves of foreign intervention. But apart from this remarkable and almost farcical position, Buckingham had to face the fact that his fleet would be locked up in an untenable position, if he sailed within the narrow strait dividing the island from the mainland. Not only was Rochelle blockaded by a French force occupying the fort of St. Louis beyond its walls with an open line of communications to its base of supplies, but the Island of Rhé was in the hands of the French Royalists. At St. Martin's there was a strong fortification well garrisoned, and a smaller fort of La Prée facing the mainland. Buckingham realized with his military instinct that the key to the situation was on the island, and that he must gain possession of that as the base of operations for the English army, and as a harbourage for English ships with the open sea beyond. There were other advantages in getting possession of the island. Its salt marshes would be a source of revenue to England if it were permanently occupied, and its position close to the Protestant provinces of France would be of infinite danger and anxiety to France if garrisoned by the English.

French Protestantism—he was reduced to a position of absurdity. But he had gone too far to turn back. After most desperate measures in England to raise this fleet and army, after such great promises of victory and such boastfulness of revenge upon France, he could never turn back without a single glorious achievement. He must rescue Rochelle in spite of itself.

In coming to this fatal decision, Buckingham, it must be remembered, had greater political and military projects than regarded Rochelle alone. At that time the religious differences in France, and the hatred of many nobles to Louis and Richelieu, whose life-long policy was to strengthen the power of the Crown by crushing the great feudal lords, had created a state of internal trouble in France which threatened to break out into a terrible civil war. Buckingham had already made overtures to the Duc de Rohan, the great Protestant Prince of the South of France, to the Duc de Lorraine, the lover of the Duchesse de Chevreuse, who, it will be remembered, accompanied Henrietta Maria to England, and to the Comte de Soissons, a member of the Blood Royal of France, who, hating Richelieu, was intriguing with the Prince of Savoy, to invade his own country. Buckingham therefore believed that, with these forces co-operating with him, Louis would soon be impotent. Nourishing such hopes as these, which were not so wildly extravagant as some now think, Buckingham was resolved to carry out his enterprise, and as a first step to gain absolute possession of the Island of Rhé.

It was not an easy task, but Buckingham's military instinct was not at fault when he marched towards St. Martin's to lay siege to the French fort.

His behaviour during the march, as afterwards during the long siege, was that of a good soldier and a noble gentleman. In the course of this narrative of his life Buckingham has been portrayed with all his faults, and his follies, vanities, and vices have not been slurred over. But now, apart from the gigantic error of ever plunging into this war with France, Buckingham stands out as a chivalrous figure. With him, as with many men, peril and hardship brought out the true mettle of his nature. Exiled from the luxury and temptation of Court life, the superficial blemishes of his character were wiped out by the wholesome discipline of an arduous campaign. The things that

matter in life became more clear to him when face to face with death. The courage which in a Court found its only opportunity in the defiance of influential enemies, and the pride of manhood which was shown by arrogance, were now transmitted into more sterling metal, and became the courage that has a noble contempt of death and personal sufferings, the pride that makes a brave man eager to be first in peril and most enduring of hardships. So also the natural courtesy of the man, and the charm of manner which had lifted him to the high place of King's Favourite, now, in the field, became real chivalry, and the personal magnetism which is the attribute of great soldiers and leaders of men.

Buckingham thought more of the comfort of the meanest trooper in his ragged regiments than of his own well-being. He personally superintended the landing of the stores, so that the men should not go hungry. On the march to St. Martin's he set them an example of endurance by lying at night on the bare ground, covered only with his cloak.* At the risk of his own life, and with a splendid courage, he saved one of the common soldiers who had been left on a sand-bank surrounded by the rising tide.† More to his honour still, in an age when war was not made with rose-water, and when non-combatants suffered, as a rule, greater horrors than the defeated enemy, Buckingham sternly forbade his men to pillage, and on the way to St. Martin's would not permit them even to enter a village.

Upon reaching St. Martin's the English troops took possession of the town, and "sat down" before the fort. At first it seemed to them an easy prize, and hopeful news was sent home to gladden the King's heart; but before a few days had passed Buckingham and his officers realized the difficulty of the task before them. In a long despatch to Lord Conway, dated July 28th, the Duke described the enemy's position.

"This is a place of great strength," he wrote, "invincible, if once perfected, and, in the imperfect state of fortification it now stands in, so strong, that the shortest way to take it is by famine. The ground it stands upon is rocky, and of such a continued and hard kind of rock, as the pickaxe will hardly fasten in it, which takes off all possibility of making of mines,

* Mr. Beaulieu to Sir Thomas Pickering.

† Sir Henry Wotton.

had we better engineers than we have in the army. They are strong in number, both of horse and foot, their horse consisting most of gentlemen, and their foot of the regiment of Champagne, which in this kingdom is called the Invincible. Ordnance they have in great store, and those very good, and excellent gunners to use them. Corn, salt-fish and wine they have in abundance, and for a long siege; and of all manner of ammunition and arms, more than they can use or spend. And to conclude, a governor that has made this the scale of his honour and fortune, out of which, having the Queen-mother and Cardinal for enemies, he will find no safety; so that before he will yield up the place, he will make it his deathbed; and if he cannot live, surely he will die in it. To this may be added, the means that are made to send him succour, and the shipping that are preparing at Bourdeaux, Brouage, Blavett, St. Malo's, and other places, which, if once joined, would make such a strength, as if they did not endanger us by sea, yet would they so divert our forces, now scattered round about the island, as we must of necessity gather our fleet into one body and so leave the other places naked for the enemy to come in with succour, which he would not fail to have in readiness to put over on such an occasion; so that considering the means they have within to hold out, and the endeavours they use abroad to send to them, wherein many accidents may happen to give them opportunity, this is like to prove a long siege, but which shall be maintained by us with courage and resolution; and I am confident his Majesty will not let us want."

There was no hiding the truth here, either from himself or from those at home, and in the same letter he pressed for the immediate despatch of reinforcements, provisions, and munitions of war. "Engineers also," adds Buckingham, "the best that could be gotten and good store of them, would not be unwelcome to us, and the sooner they could come the better; together with shovels and pickaxes; and those somewhat stouter than the former, which their length makes something unwieldy."

Clearly, however, as Buckingham saw the true facts of his situation he was by no means disheartened, and directed his whole energies to the task before him. Batteries were made against those parts of the fort from which the enemy's ordnance caused most havoc, and the men were set to dig trenches as fast

as the hardness of the stony ground would permit, so as to cut off the citadel from all communication on the land side. Its approach from the sea was already blockaded by four or five well-armed shallops, which lay under it at night, and by several of the great ships of the fleet lying-to not far off. The rest of the fleet was dispersed round the island to prevent any ship gaining access to the besieged. Various English regiments were scattered about the island, investing the smaller forts, so as to hinder communication between them, while Lord Mountjoy, commander of the horse, beat up and down the island to cut off the straggling forces of the enemy. "The other night," writes the Duke, "we took thirty musketeers and some horses sent out by the enemy to fetch water, which we have sent over to the mainland." Buckingham himself was the life and soul of all these operations. Mr. Henry de Vic, one of his officers, writing to Lord Conway upon the day preceding that of the Duke's own despatch, pays a tribute to his conduct, which is corroborated by other witnesses.

"Our General (I speak it before God, and without flattery) behaves himself in all things with admiration, making those parts appear which lay hid before, for want of occasion to produce them. His care is infinite, his courage undaunted, his patience and continual labour beyond what could ever have been expected; his affableness, liberality, and courtesy, not more extolled by his own than by his enemies themselves; himself views the ground, goes to the trenches, visits the batteries, observes where the shot doth light, and what effect it works upon the enemy; in a word, goes himself in person to places of the greatest danger, oftener than becomes a person of his rank: but where unto (besides his own care and courage which carries him to do it) he is partly constrained by the carelessness of some officers. If a soldier wants a biscuit or a workman a spade, it must come to his ears and pass by his order; not that he would have it so, but that the defects of others in their duties make his care and providence extend even to the ordering and providing those petty things."

For a time Buckingham had differences of opinion with Sir John Burgh, the general of the land forces, a valiant and experienced soldier who resented the authoritative manner of the Duke—a novice in the art of war—and expressed his resentment in rough words. It seems, also, that Sir John was

jealous of his influence of a man named Dolbier, formerly the commissary-general of Mansfeld's armies, who was close in the counsels of the Duke, and was prone to give his advice too freely. But these quarrels did not lead to any serious result, and when the hardships and dangers of the English troops became greater as the weeks passed, the officers worked loyally together under the Duke's command.

Sir William Beecher, who had gone with Soubise into Rochelle, and Buckingham's friend Dick Graeme had now sailed to England, with a report of that disappointing visit and with instructions to bring back reinforcements by the quickest wind. Upon his arrival home early in August, with the letters that have been already quoted, the King wrote to Buckingham congratulating him upon his "happy success" in taking the island of Rhé, and promising him a fresh supply of victuals, munition, four hundred men for recruits, and £14,000 in ready money, to be brought back by Beecher, "who by the grace of God shall set sail within these eight days." Charles also promised that two regiments of a thousand men apiece, victualled for three months, should be embarked by the 10th of September. He was also making as many officers as he could from the low countries to go to Rhé, and hoped to raise two thousand men in Scotland under the command of Lord Morton and Sir William Balfour. "So far for supplies," he wrote, "which, by the grace of God, I shall send speedily unto you, and you may certainly expect."

The King's hopes, however, were bitterly disappointed. The difficulty in obtaining ready money was so acute, the strain upon the Treasury was so severe, and there was such an utter lack of enthusiasm for the war, in the City and Provinces, that it was almost beyond the power of the Privy Council and the State Departments to fulfil the King's commands. With his whole soul set upon the success of his friend at Rhé, Charles fretted and fumed with anger at their poverty of resource.

"I confess," he wrote to his Chancellor of the Exchequer, "these delays make me impatient even almost beyond patience, if I did not hope the goodness of your answer should in some measure recompense the slowness of it." And later he wrote, "If Buckingham should not now be supplied, not in show, but substantially, having so bravely, and, I thank God, successfully

began his expedition, it were an irrevocable shame to me and all this nation, and those that either hinder or, according to their several places, furthers not this action as much as they may, deserves to make their end at Tyburn, or some such place."

Sir William Beecher was not able to put out of Portsmouth with his new fleet and provisions until September 10th, and was then driven back by bad winds. But, setting sail again on the 21st, he had a successful passage, and reached the Isle of Rhé safely a few days later. In addition to his welcome supplies, he carried with him a batch of letters, which the exiled Buckingham must have seized upon with eager hands. From the King there were letters full of affection and good hope, and promises of further reinforcements. In one of them he writes—

"STEENIE,

"Beecher staying longer at the sea side than I expected has given me the occasion of writing to you, which I do, rather to assure you, that upon all occasions I am glad to remember you, and that no distance of place, nor length of time, can make me slacken, much less diminish my love to you, than that I have any business to advertise you of. I know, too, that this is nothing, it being nothing but what you know already; yet imagining that we (like usurers) love sometimes to look on our riches, I think it is not unacceptable to you to bid you look of that that I esteem to be the greatest riches, or now hardest to be found, true friendship, there being no stile justlier to be given to any man, than that to me of being,

"Your faithful, &c.,

"CHARLES, R.

"Aldershot,

"25th of August, 1627" *

From Conway and other friends Buckingham received faithful assurance of service in the usual flattery. And there were also letters from his family which we may well believe he read with no less eagerness. But these could not have given him the pleasure he expected. As already suggested, his family had for the first time begun to lose their faith in his supreme

* Hardwicke State Papers.

wisdom, and if some of the letters from home that have been preserved in our State Papers were received by him at this time from Beecher, as seems probable, they must have given him gloomy thoughts and a sad heart. There was a long letter from his mother (though it was written, perhaps, at a slightly later date) containing more candid criticism than he was in the habit of reading or receiving, and hardly atoned by the affectionate words with which it was accompanied.

"MY DEARLY BELOVED SON" (she wrote),

"I am very sorry you have entered into so great business, and so little care to supply your wants, as you see of the haste that is made to you. I hope your eyes will be opened to see what a great gulph of businesses you have put yourself into, and so little regarded at home, where all is merry and well pleased, though the ships be not victualled as yet, nor mariners to go with them. As for money, the kingdom will not supply your expences, and every man groans under the burthen of the times. At your departure from me, you told me you went to make peace, but it was not from your heart. This is not the way; for you to embroil the whole Christian world in wars, and then to declare it for religion, and make God a party to these woful affairs, so far from God as light and darkness, and the high way to make all Christian princes to bend their forces against us, that otherwise in policy would have taken our parts. You know the worthy King your Master never liked that way, and as far as I can perceive there is none that cries not out of it. You that acknowledge the infinite mercy and providence of Almighty God, in preserving your life amongst so many that falls down dead on every side you, and spares you for more honour to himself, if you would not be wilfully blind, and overthrow yourself body and soul; for He hath not, I hope, made you so great, and given you so many excellent parts, as to suffer you to die in a ditch.

"Let me, that is your mother, intreat you to spend some of your hours in prayers, and meditating what is fitting and pleasing in His sight that has done so much for you; and that, however you so much strive for, send it for His honour and glory, and you will soon find a change so great that you would not for all the kingdoms in this world forego, if you might have

them at your disposing. And do not think it out of fear, or humorousness of a woman, I persuade you to this. No, no! It is that I scorn. I would have you leave this bloody way in which you are crept into, I am sure contrary to your nature and disposition. God hath blessed you with a virtuous wife and sweet daughter, with another son, I hope, if you do not destroy it by this way you take; she cannot believe a word you speak, you have so much deceived her. She hath bestored [bestirred] herself carefully for you, in sending sundries with the supply that is now in coming, though slowly; it would have been worse but for her.

"But now let me come to myself. If I had a world you should command it, and whatsoever I have, or shall have, it is all yours by right; but alas, I have laid out that money I had, or more by a thousand pounds, by your consent, in buying of Gouldsmise [*sic*] Grange, which I am very sorry for now. I never dreamed you should have needed any of my help, for if I had they should have wanted all, and myself, before you. I hope this servant will bring us better news of your resolutions than yet we hear of, which I pray heartily for, and give alms for you, that it will please Almighty God to direct your heart the best way to His honour and glory.

"I am ever,

"Your most loving affectionate sad mother,

"M. BUCKINGHAM"

Kate no doubt wrote to her husband so that the letter might go by the Beecher's fleet. There is a curious letter, of uncertain date, in which she says that "last night she heard very good news that he had taken the ships which came to relieve the fort, which she hopes they will now quickly yield up." Then one hopes he will remember his promise in making haste home. Both for the public and their private good in Court there is great need of him. "Your great Lady" [referring, apparently, to his mother] "that you believe is so much your friend uses your friends something worse than when you were here, and your favour has made her so great as now she cares for nobody." She begs him to burn this letter.

To Dr. Moore, Buckingham's physician, who was with him in camp, the Duchess writes entreating him to remain with the

Duke, and to do his best to hinder him from landing at Rochelle—

"I should think myself" (she continued) "the most miserablest woman in the world if my Lord should go into the mainland, for though God has blest him hitherto beyond all imagination in this action, yet I hope he will not still run on in that hope, to venture himself beyond all discretion, and I hope this journey has not made him a Puritan to believe in predestination. I pray keep him from being too venturous, for it does not belong to a General to walk trenches ; therefore have a care of him. I will assure you by this action he is not any whit the more popular man than when he went, therefore you may see whether these people be worthy for him to venture his life for."

During Sir William Beecher's absence in England the siege had settled down into a monotonous blockade, the enemy strengthening their fortifications, and the English troops closing them in by lines of trenches and redoubts. Knowing Buckingham to be the moving spirit of the siege, they constantly endeavoured to take his life, and day after day directed their shots at his lodging, especially at such times when they imagined him to be there. Mr. de Vic, writing again to Lord Conway, on August 14, says he was many times with his Excellency when the shots passed through the room over the one in which he was sitting.

But Toiras, the governor of the fort, adopted baser means to attain this purpose, and one day, early in the month of August, a spy was captured in camp who confessed, under threats of torture, that he had been set on to kill the Duke by Monsieur Toiras, who promised him large rewards if he succeeded. Upon being searched there was found on this fellow a short and ugly dagger, with a broad double-edged blade, with a sharp point, "the handle of it longer than would suffice for a good whole handful, twisted about with silk to take faster hold, and a little cross-bar between the blade and handle to stay the hand and give strength to the blow." This weapon was sent back to England as a memento of the Duke's providential escape.

At sea the approach to the fort was guarded by the English ships, disposed in the form of a half-moon, within half a musket-shot of each other, and by about twenty shallops,

which at night lay close under the citadel, "well armed with murderous muskets, pikes, and fireworks." Buckingham had also devised an additional means of strengthening the blockade by throwing a boom across the waterway made of great masts supported at the ends by small boats.

For the first two months the condition of the English was fairly satisfactory. The men, on the whole, were in good health; they were becoming hardened by the healthy life and strict discipline, and out of such raw material Buckingham was shaping good soldiers. But the Duke looked ahead. Although he guessed, and accurately, that the besieged were nearing the end of their provisions, he could not expect to starve them into surrender speedily, and in the mean time his own supplies were running out. Then, while he was disappointed by the inaction of the Duc de Rohan, the Comte de Soissons, and Charles Emmanuel of Savoy, whose plots against the French King were not carried into effect, the Duc d'Angoulême, with an army of 6000 foot, 600 horse, and 40 cannon, had come within a mile of Rochelle and threatened to make a descent upon the isle of Rhé. This had caused a panic among the Rochellese, and they now sent urgent entreaties to Buckingham for aid, so that they might throw up new fortifications. The Duke, though he could ill spare a single man, sent over the five hundred French volunteers who were now with him, being anxious to bind the citizens of Rochelle to close engagements with him so that they would not be tempted to accept terms of peace with the French Government. But Buckingham, with a great French army threatening him from the mainland, and with the fort of St. Martin's still holding out, had cause for anxiety, and his repeated letters to the King and Lord Conway, urging the speedy despatch of reinforcements and supplies, were not the demands of a man afraid of his task, but of a commander who knows his needs and the means by which he can alone attain success.

Towards the end of September, as narrated in a letter by Sir Edward Conway to his father, the Secretary of State, dated from the Isle of Rhé, on the 20th of the month, a misfortune happened in camp which did much to lower the spirits of the English troops. This was the death of Sir John Burgh, who one night in the trenches was shot through the stomach, and died

within four hours. "The sorrow of the Duke," said young Conway, imitating his father in flattery of Buckingham, "and the honour he doth in his burial, are sufficient encouragements to hazard dying." There was a difference between them, he adds, through some inconsiderate words which were by the Duke so freely forgiven, and he taken in so secret familiarity, that the State thinks an honest man and the Duke cannot be enemies. The place of Sir John Burgh was offered to Conway, but he declined it in favour of Sir William Courteney, who became "Colonel-General," with Sir Francis Willoughby as Sergeant-Major-General. "The army grows daily weaker, victuals waste, purses are empty, ammunition consumes, winter grows, our enemies increase in number and power, and we hear nothing from England." *

When Sir William Beecher returned on September 25, he gave thanks to God that he had arrived so opportunely, for it was conceived by every one that if he had delayed longer the whole nation would have been endangered owing to lack of stores. But he found the soldiers in good heart, for although the heavy rains had been to the infinite advantage of the enemy, giving them a new water-supply of which they had been in great need, it was evident that they were now on short rations. Deserters would have run away from the fort down from the citadel every day had they not been driven back by their own men, so that they might starve together the sooner. Then a drummer came out requesting a passport for one of the officers to treat of a matter of importance, but he was answered that unless he came to treat for the surrender of the fort he would not be allowed to pass through their lines. This was a sign that the besieged were getting to the end of their resources. A few days later the joyful fact was corroborated by two gentlemen coming out under a flag of truce to discuss terms of capitulation. Buckingham received them courteously, but, finding that their purpose was to seek excuse for delay, gave them until four o'clock of that afternoon to present their conditions. At that hour, however, they sent a letter requesting a postponement of the time until eight in the evening, which gave the Duke a suspicion that they had received hopeful news of relief. He therefore gave strict orders for the utmost vigilance of the fleet in order to

* Domestic State Papers.

prevent any approach to the citadel. That night, however, was very dark and stormy, and suddenly Buckingham and his officers were startled by signal guns at sea, giving warning of an enemy's approach. Buckingham, greatly alarmed at the thought that all his care for months might be frustrated by a hostile fleet running the blockade, hastened on board ship and sailed out into the teeth of the storm to take command of the defence. But by a disastrous error, owing to the darkness of the night, almost all our frigates sailed in a contrary direction to the enemy's fleet, and thirty-five of their vessels laden with provisions broke through our line of battle. Many of them, however, were stopped by the hawsers that had been stretched between our great battleships, and the admiral's flag-ship was captured. But fourteen or fifteen of the others got through, until they lay under the very walls of the French port, the remainder flying before the wind to the safety of the open sea. Buckingham behaved with the greatest gallantry, and exposed himself to great personal risks in the endeavour to repair the disaster. He signalled to his frigates to close with the blockade runners in the dark, and to set them on fire. But, owing to the storm, the darkness, and the general confusion, these endeavours were without success. The next day the duke in person superintended a desperate attempt, by means of small boats, to tow a fire-ship which had been set burning, at great risk and hardihood, into the midst of the relief ships. These had been unable to discharge their supplies owing to our batteries, which kept up a heavy fire; but when the wind calmed down and the tide went out, the enemy succeeded in thrusting off the fire-ship with long poles, and that night got the ships' stores into the fort.*

It was, of course, a great calamity to Buckingham and his friends. At the beginning they had realized that St. Martin's, so strongly fortified on rocky ground, could hardly be taken by assault with the comparatively small force under their command, and that it would have to be starved into surrender. Now the tables were almost turned. For the relief ships had brought men, stores, and provisions for the besieged, while the besiegers were in desperate straits for food. They were not only on short rations, but much of the food they had was damaged and uneatable, and the corn being unground, the soldiers were ready

* Sir William Beecher to Lord Conway. Hardwicke State Papers.

to mutiny for want of bread. Sickness, also, and the extreme toil of digging trenches was wasting the strength of the men, and their immoderate eating of grapes, which grew plentifully on the island, and from which the men could not be restrained by the advice of their officers, had caused dysentery among them, so that two thousand five hundred men were down with that disease, which daily grew worse, and there were less than five thousand able men fit for work and fighting. With their clothes all ragged, and without boots or shoes, it was a dismal prospect for them with winter ahead, and still no news of relief from England.

No wonder, therefore, that a deadly gloom spread throughout the camp when the blockade-runners had got through to the fort. Mr. de Vic, writing to Lord Conway, says, "It was impossible for me to have imagined so sudden and so great a change as I saw in us upon the coming of the last succour of the citadel. Such an alteration there was upon that unhappy accident, of joy into sadness, confidence into despair, triumphs to retreats, as I could hardly conceive the same spirits had been capable of so much contrariety. I have too honourable an opinion of us to attribute this unto fear, but it was very like it, and of many, but questionless undeservedly, thought to be so. Neither do I think it a longing in some to return home to their wives; I hope we have none so anxious; or impatience in others to be a little scunter in fresh meats and desirous to eat Christmas beef at home; our own courage, the honour of our nation, his Majesty's service, and the very example of the enemy teach us better things. I rather attribute it to the care of our officers, who, considering our men die apace, and like to fall more and more by means of sickness, hard duties in winter time, together with the ability of the enemy to subsist long, both by what they have already received and (notwithstanding all we could do), would come in daily, by the opportunity of storms, which in this season and country were not scanty, thought fitter for his Majesty's service to make a voluntary and safe retreat, than to hazard a forcible and shameful expulsion by the enemy, and our own necessities." *

Buckingham called a council of war, and there was a long and earnest discussion among his officers. After reviewing the

* Hardwicke State Papers.

situation, one and all voted for an abandonment of the siege, and a speedy return home. To Buckingham such advice was gall and wormwood. To return, after all his boasts, with nothing achieved but ignominious failure, was a bitter and humiliating prospect.

"The incomparable courage of his Excellency," says his faithful admirer, Mr. de Vic, "had" [would have] "overcome all these difficulties (though pushed home unto him with so much plainness, and in unfit places, to which he opposed all the arguments that wisdom, valour, entireness of devotion and affection to his prince and country, and sense of the distressed and lamentable condition of the poor churches, by such a desertion, could suggest unto him), had not a more forcible argument, the consideration of want of victuals, represented unto him by those that he could not but believe in that point, but who were themselves deceived in it, made him to assent unto it."

The truth was, that with more dangerous enemies at home than in the fort of St. Martin's, Buckingham dared not override the unanimous verdict of his officers, and was therefore compelled, against every instinct of his nature, to yield to their councils.

Preparations were set on foot for an immediate withdrawal from the island. The guns were taken from the batteries and put on board, the landing-place was fortified to cover the retreat, and the men received orders to carry all stores to the ships. But before these arrangements were effected, Monsieur de Soubise and four of his gentlemen arrived in haste from Rochelle, where the news of the English retreat had caused the greatest uneasiness, and they brought such piteous entreaties from the citizens, and such eager promises of a more strenuous co-operation, that Buckingham postponed the final orders of retreat.

The offers brought by M. de Soubise would, if accepted, certainly relieve the Duke's immediate anxieties. The Rochellese were willing to take a thousand invalid soldiers into their town, and to send five hundred of their own men to take their share of the siege work. They also offered to supply a number of small vessels to make the guard stronger.* At the same time Buckingham received offers of greater assistance from the

* Sir William Beecher to Lord Conway, State Papers.

Protestant inhabitants of the island of Rhé, who had been well treated by the English, and feared the vengeance of Angoulême and his army. They were ready to send in five hundred volunteers, to take off the remainder of the sick men, and to assist the guardships at sea by men and boats. Another thing that brought new hope to the Duke was the return of Dolbier, his military adviser, who had been to England and back with despatches. He brought a letter from Charles, giving promise of the speedy arrival of Holland's fleet.

"STEENIE" (wrote the King),

"I have received yours by this bearer, Dalbier, whom I have dispatched as soon as was possible, and to whose relation I shall need to add little ; for I think he deserves the character that you put on him, and I assure you, it rejoices me not a little, to hear him (being a stranger and a soldier) give so just a description of your inclination (which I know to be true) that making me believe the rest he says concerning your proficiency in the trade you have now so happily begun, which though I never doubted, yet I am glad to see that truth forces all men to approve my judgment of you. Within a week after you have received this, I hope Holland shall deliver another from me, therefore now I haste to end, only I must chide you, (if it be true that I hear), that you hazard yourself too boldly : This I must command you to mend and take care of ; there being more inconveniences in it than I (almost) dare write, or fit for you to hear, but it is enough, that you are willed to preserve yourself for his sake, that is and ever shall be

"Your loving, etc.,

"CHARLES, R.

"Theobald's,

"the 20th of Sept., 1627

"This bearer will tell you that I approve all your designs ; and be confident of what succours these froward times can yield, which though they cannot be according to mind, yet by God's grace, shall be enough for your fortune to maintain a just cause." *

At the same time as Buckingham received this new promise

* Hardwicke State Papers.

of Holland's speedy arrival with men and food, Dolbier discovered, or conveniently put forward in the Duke's interests as a further inducement to remain, that there had been a miscalculation in the amount of the stores in hand, and that by careful management they would hold out for some time longer, until they were reinforced by another English fleet continually promised by the King. In view of all this, Buckingham again put the question to the council of war, as to whether they should remain or retreat. Doubtless he urged his own views forcibly, and appealed to his officers with that persuasive eloquence which he could so well command in moments of emotion and solemnity, his supreme rank and authority enforcing such eloquence, so that few men would be bold enough to challenge his wisdom. Be that as it may, however, it is certain that with only one dissentient the officers were unanimous in resolving to continue the campaign, as only a few hours before they had been of one voice in counselling retreat. Buckingham has been denounced by many critics for this decision, but it was founded upon reasonable hopes. His urgent appeals for aid had been answered by the King with the good news that a new fleet under the command of Wilmot and Holland would speedily sail for the island, and one at least of his political schemes had been fulfilled, for the Duc de Rohan was moving at the head of a strong Protestant army, which was causing great anxiety to Louis and Richelieu, thereby relieving Buckingham from the immediate danger of a general advance of the French army to Rochelle. If Holland's fleet had sailed at the appointed time, it is probable that the fort of St. Martin's would have fallen, and that Buckingham's campaign would have resulted at least in holding the Isle of Rhé as an English possession.

Unfortunately for the Duke, the situation in England was more deplorable than ever. The news of the relief of St. Martin's by the store-ships had come as a thunderclap to the English Court, who had been expecting its downfall. Lord Wilmot was the first to send the news to Secretary Conway, having received it from the master of a Flemish ship from St. Martin's, who put in at Plymouth. "He delights not to be the messenger of ill news," he wrote,* "but wishes him to use his discretion whether it be fit for a serious consultation, now it be

* Domestic State Papers.

found possible to victual the fort, what is timely to be thought on for a long siege. It is scarcely to be imagined how this attempt could have succeeded, for there is a nightly watch of six hundred men in boats, and the Duke takes such pains that the soldiers themselves pity him. He is commonly in these boats or in the trenches till midnight, and there is a battery of seven cannon, that beats on the very landing-place, besides a sunken collier, whose ordinance plays on the same spot."

There were some more ready to condemn the Duke than to commiserate with him. Lord Wimbledon wrote to Buckingham a letter full of criticism and advice which must have seemed grossly impertinent to the proud Duke. It seems not a little strange, he said, that a fort but of four points, and not highly mounted, should have held out so long. Having been so long in the military profession, and being fresh returned from a great siege, he tendered his advice as to the best mode of proceeding, and the materials most applicable for approaches. He had seen in his siege of Eroll a battery made in one night for heavy cannon, which played next morning by break of day, and that battery was sixteen feet high from the platform, and cannon-proof. Then he commented strongly on the fort having been relieved by sea, of which the Duke was absolute master. Arguing upon the approach of wintry weather and the time given for the French to make preparations for relief, he said the time had either come to take the place, or leave it, and look to Rochelle. If the Duke determined to continue the siege, he advised him to go roundly about it, and to advance two strong works as near the sea as he could. The last part of Wimbledon's advice was certainly sound enough, and, if carried out to the letter, would have saved the Duke from his final disaster. If the Duke, he said, was constrained to leave the siege, he must provide for the retreat by making some good works, and placing the ships under the protection of ordnance. Finally, he cautioned him against a charge of the enemy on embarking—a caution which, as it happened, was a fatal prophecy.

Charles was the only one not to lose heart in the face of this fresh disaster, and was more anxious to help than to criticize. Secretary Conway, writing to Wilmot, said "the King is no way discouraged by the information from Rhé, but desires him not to divulge it if possible." In the same letter, Conway

informs Wilmot that Charles had sent Lord Holland 1000*l.* "for better contenting the officers," and instructed him "to use all expedition to put his soldiers aboard and to make all haste to the Isle of Rhé."

In another letter to Wilmot, Conway says that "the King has been very passionate in hasting this expedition, and has put two captains that are to come about with the ships into an earnest zeal to lose no opportunity."

But Holland was unable to "make haste," because he could not get either his men or supplies. The country was in a state of tumult over the billeting of soldiers in private houses, and many householders drove the men into the streets to starve, if they could not get other relief. The soldiers themselves took every opportunity of deserting, and the Domestic State Papers dealing with this time are full of accounts of their disorderly and mutinous conduct. The letters of Conway and other members of the Council are also a dismal record of delays and disappointments over the sailing of the fleet under Wilmot and Holland. The Earl of Holland, who was to take command over Wilmot and the fleet, was not personally at fault. Writing on October 17, from Portsmouth to the King, he says he will not fail to be gone on Friday, though as yet the most part of his victuals were not aboard, but the winds have been so violent that they could not with any boats lay the ships aboard. There were great faults in these services. He prays for their amendment and that he may be able to do the King's noble servant and his own dearest friend some fortunate service.

Wilmot, writing to Conway on the 18th of October—Friday having come and gone—says that they have greedily expected the ships from the Downs (under Sir John Chudleigh, who was to join the rest of the fleet at Plymouth), and is almost in despair that the wind, which is good for all other purposes, keeps them in the Downs. He complains that although they have shipping there for one thousand men, which they could have sent away, they have no crews for them. A letter was received about this time from Buckingham to the Earl of Holland, written before the arrival of Beecher at the Isle of Rhé, and it caused the gravest alarm to the King and the whole Council. "The King was infinitely troubled to see it," writes Nicolas, and in a letter to Holland he says that "he doubts if the Earl make not haste that the Duke

and the army is in very great extremity, if not lost, which the Lord of Heaven forbid."

On October 17 Holland writes to Conway from Portsmouth that he is packing aboard all those provisions that he found unshipped, and will himself go aboard that night to lose no jot of time. With the morning's tide he hopes to set sail. Writing at twelve o'clock on the same night from Cowes, Lord Holland says that being assured of an impossibility to get out till the next day, he put himself in a fisher-boat to gain forward some leagues ere he could land to take port [to Plymouth], but the extremity of weather forced him into Cowes with the nearest escape of drowning.

Wilmot, who was at Plymouth, waiting for Holland and his ships to join him, writes on the same day to Conway that he hears no news of Holland. This second command much distracts him, and he has resolved, if Lord Holland comes not on the morrow by twelve o'clock, to set sail.

On October 21, Lord Wilmot, in another letter to Conway, dated "aboard the *Bonaventure*, at 8 o'clock in the morning," says that they are all ready to sail. He complains that the supplies from London are sent in so disorderly a manner that it would make a faithful servant impatient to see his Majesty so abused. There is neither commissary of victuals, nor any one to give account of arms. They found 1000 muskets, but no pikes or armour. He may assure the King that they will be that Sunday morning, at 9 o'clock, under sail with a prosperous wind. In the letter he gives the latest news about the state of things at Rochelle. Unless supplies be speedily sent, and that royally, it will be impossible Buckingham should continue long there; and it is not victuals only that is needed in winter sieges, but clothing, fire, and many other things. They hear that clothes is [*sic*] an extreme want in the Duke's army, and that most of them go barefoot.

On October 29 the fleet had still not sailed, and Holland, who had now found Wilmot at Plymouth, writes to Conway that the wind has changed south-west, so that they are obliged to wait. He complains that there was no officer or "creature" who could tell what there was aboard the provision ships, and that five of them are Dutch, without any English amongst them; and it is feared they will take any excuse, on the terms



HENRY RICH, EARL OF HOLLAND
AFTER A PORTRAIT BY VANDYCK

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we are now on with them, to steal away. They find no pikes nor corselets for the 2000 men, but the writer tells them they were sent before by Sir William Beecher. . . . He overtook at Exeter the £1000 sent to the officers, and took it to port with him, which saved two days, and was a great comfort to the poor officers. He will lose no time, for he never had impatience so great to wait on their dear lord and friend. To make the more haste he brought no creatures with him: therefore Conway will receive this scroll in his "vile hand."

John Ashburnham, an officer on board the *Bonaventure*, writes to Nicolas, and gives further details of the scandalous inefficiency of those authorities responsible for victualling the ship. He has received a general account of the victuals of the fleet, but they have been sent with a neglect of order that cannot be forgiven. Sir Henry Mainwaring is forced to go from ship to ship to search what they have. If they should arrive before the Duke has come away, there will be no more than will bring him off with conveniency, so that, except daily supplies are sent after them, the action will perish. He should like to see the lives of those people who doubt the Duke's letter stand the hazard of that letter. He cannot but be impatient when he thinks at what a cheap rate they have sold the Duke, but he defies them to say that he [Buckingham] has not done as much as flesh and blood could do. On October 25 Ashburnham writes again that this is his last farewell, though they could not yesterday get out of the Catwater. They now find that they have provisions for the whole army for seventeen days; but the 2000 men are living upon them in the mean time, so that when they get to Rhé they shall not have above eleven days.

The day after his "last farewell" we find Ashburnham again writing to Nicolas. It pleases God, he says, "to give a contrary wind absolutely to frustrate all sort of hope of good success. . . . Such a rotten, miserable fleet set out to sea no man ever saw. Our enemies seeing it may scoff at our nation. O that the King's command were with my lord now to command him away!" When he first heard the news that the King had come away he was extreme sorry, now he wishes, with all his heart, that he were there.

Two days later a letter from the Earl of Holland goes to the King. He finds by the bearer that our officers in the Isle

of Rhé have great apprehensions of the King of France landing an army on the island under the defence of the little fort of La Prée, that is yet untaken. It is therefore necessary that our recruits be hastened, and likewise the Scottish regiment. He fears there is no good order taken for the new levies which are to come to Plymouth. Yesterday 50 men arrived out of Dorsetshire, and as yet neither the Deputy Lieutenants nor the Mayor has any knowledge of it. The Earl finding them, disposed of them amongst some of the weak companies. They would otherwise, every man of them, have run away. On his own credit he has provided 200 or 300 live sheep to carry with them for the sick men, who die for want of fresh meat, and 2000 or 3000 pair of stockings for the men that work in the trenches; also physic and an apothecary; and he hopes that Primrose, the little French doctor, will go with them. Most despair; but he cannot, especially if men and provisions timely follow, as to which their trust is wholly on the King's own ordering and care, which will greatly redound to his honour.

So the days pass, and with them letters to the King and Council from the commanders of the fleet, telling of fresh delays and fresh grievances, of the tardy delivery of supplies, and of the consumption of those intended for Buckingham. On the 29th of October, a word of hope is sent to Conway from Wilmot, who says that the fleet is already free of Catwater, with fine weather and the fairest wind that ever blew. But he laments that what provisions they carry will not be more than enough for twenty days. Other defects are very great. There are no pikes, very few corselets, no match, and most of the fleet poor rotten ships. There is urgent necessity for sending down commanders to take care of the fresh men now assembling at Plymouth. The country is weary of the burthen of them, and will rather encourage them to run away than to stay. On the 30th of October, Holland writes to Conway that they lack fifteen hundred swords and eight hundred corselets. And he has worse news. On Monday, contrary to the opinion of the seamen, he forced the whole fleet out of Catwater into Plymouth Sound, but at night they were driven back by a storm, the violence of which he described, and in which the ships were in great danger. On the last day of the month, Viscount Wilmot tell the same unhappy tale. His "fairest wind that ever blew" had changed to "the

cruellest storm of twenty hours, that has almost ever been observed. And, alas! although all diligence be used to repair the ships, it will, for a time, hinder their putting to sea."

Truly, to poor Charles it must have seemed that the very elements had conspired to hinder the setting out of that fleet upon which his very heart was bound. For weeks and months he had written anxious, pleading, angry, and passionate letters to the Council, to the commanders, to many others concerned in the business, urging them to "make haste," "to use all expedition," "to lose no minute," to get ready soldiers and supplies and ships to go to the relief of the Duke, "to whom whosoever does the best service, is most happy, be it by life or death." He felt, and justly, that his own honour was at stake in the duty of sending the reinforcements so urgently desired by his friend, and so definitely promised by himself, and to do him justice it was no fault of his (except—and it is a very great exception—in ever having sanctioned the expedition, and in having quarrelled with his Parliament) that such lamentable delays took place. Plead as he would, and command as he would, he found it impossible to get willing volunteers for the war, impossible to stir any enthusiasm among his people, impossible to turn the rogues of his service into honest men. More than a month before the fleet actually sailed, he wrote to Buckingham with a promise that "Holland, within two or three days, will attend you with supplies." We have seen how that hope was frustrated, but even then Charles had to excuse the tardy setting out of the relief ships.

"I have received your dispatch by Jack Ashburnham," he writes, "by which I have understood that necessity in which ye are, and I am much grieved and ashamed that I must make an apology for our slowness here in giving you supplies; the cause whereof is the hardness of getting mariners, and the slow proceeding of the commissioners and the navy (which all commissioners are subject to), money being readlier furnished than I could have expected in these necessitous times; but for that our best answer is (as the schoolboy says) pardon this, and we shall do so no more; and now by the grace of God, ye shall have no more cause to complain of us, for now we know how to prevent those faults, which we without some experience could hardly foresee." After a few words about the negotiations with

the Danish ambassadors who offered to mediate between England and France, and about a favour asked by the Duke for the promotion of Colonel Brett, Charles returns to what was most on his mind. "Lastly, for God's sake be not disheartened by our by-past slowness, for, by the grace of God, it is all past. This I say not, that I fear thy constant stout heart can slack in an honest cause, but that some rascal may cast doubts in the army, as if I neglected you; which I imagine is likely enough to fall out, since some villains here stick not to divulge it. And it is possible that those who were the cause of your consultation of leaving the siege, and coming home (and for the resisting of which I give them a thousand thanks), may aulter such things. Now I pray God to prosper me as I shall stick to thee in all occasions, and in this action, as I shall show myself,

"Your loving, etc.,

"CHARLES R.

"Hampton Court,
1st October, 1627"*

On the 13th of the month Charles wrote again to Buckingham in words of acute anxiety.

"Steenie," he said, "I have understood by Jack Ashburnham your necessities for fault of timely supplies. I still stand in fear, until I shall hear from you, that these may come too late, but I hope that God is more merciful to me, than to inflict so great a punishment on me." He tells him of further conversation with the Danish ambassadors, who urged him to send Buckingham powers to treat with France, but his answer was that, "it was no ways honourable for me to send powers to treat before I knew France's disposition to treat, it being necessary for my honour that they should begin, not I. After some dispute, they found my reasons good, they ending with this request (which I could not refuse, but was glad of) that they might advertise you from time to time of their proceedings with the French king. And to give them some contentment at their farewell, I told them that in case they made a peace between me and France, the army that you command should be ready to serve my uncle, if he desired it. Now, honest rascal, though I refused, being demanded, to send them powers to treat, yet thou (knowing my well-grounded confidence of them) mayst easily judge the

* Hardwicke State Papers.

warrant-dormant power thou hast in this, as in anything else, where confidence may be placed in any man : but for fear that thy modesty in these particulars might hinder thee to remember thy power of trust, which I have given thee, I thought not amiss to write as I have written."

On November 6th, that is two days before the Earl of Holland and Viscount Wilmot did at last get away with the fleet after such long and agonizing delays, the King wrote one more letter to his friend, a very melancholy letter, though it breathed a generous affection for the Duke.

"STEENIE,

"I pray God that this letter be useless or never come to your hands, this being only to meet you at your landing in England, in case you should come from Ré, without perfecting your work, happily begun, but, I must confess with grief, ill seconded. A letter you sent to Jack Epslie is the cause of this, wherein ye have taught me patience, and how to seek the next best in misfortunes. This is, therefore, to give you power (in case ye should imagine that ye have not enough already) to put in execution any of those designs ye mentioned to Jack Epslie, or any other that you shall like of, so that I leave it freely to your will, whether after your landing in England, ye will set forth again to some design before you come hither ; or else that ye will first come to ask my advice, before you undertake a new work ; assuring you, that with whatsoever success ye shall come, to me ye shall ever be welcome, one of my greatest griefs being that I have not been with you in this time of suffering, for I know we would have much eased each other's griefs. I cannot stay longer on this subject, for fear of losing myself in it. To conclude, you cannot come so soon as you are welcome ; and, unfeignedly in my mind, ye have gained as much reputation, with wise and honest men, in this action, as if ye had performed all your desires. I have no more to say at this time, but conjure thee, for my own sake, to have a care of thy health, for every day I find new reasons to confirm me in being

"Your loving, etc.,

"CHARLES R.

"Whitehall,

"the 6th of November, 1627" *

* Hardwicke State Papers.

All this correspondence gives a very vivid idea of the King's anxieties and troubles, of the lamentable situation in England, and of Lord Holland's and Viscount Wilmot's continual disappointments over the delay of their "rotten ships." But in the mean time the situation in the Isle of Rhé was still more melancholy and pitiful. The ragged, wretched soldiers endured cold, wet, and hunger in the trenches. "Pity our misery!" writes one of them. "If our lord of Holland be not speedy, we must truss up bag and baggage."* That was their own hope now, and "they have looked themselves blind"† in searching the sea with their telescopes from the tops of houses for the sign of the sails that would bring them food and clothes, and ammunition, and healthy men to take the place of the diseased and starving fellows who were rotting behind the earthworks.

And what of Buckingham? He, the soul of this enterprise, the dominant will which controlled the labour of them all and commanded their patience and long-suffering, what was the colour of his thoughts during these last months of the siege? He does not reveal himself, except by his actions. Never once does he utter a despairing cry at the failure of his hopes. Never once does he break out into passionate anger at the broken promises and the muddled, miserable administration of the Navy Office. Knowing his character, how quick he was in former days to make enemies of all who thwarted his purpose, how impatient of advice, how scornful of criticism, how hot and rash in his temper, one must marvel at the self-restraint of the man during these months of waiting for the help which never came. It was bad for the others, for the men who had been pressed into the war and dragged from their homes to dig ditches, and to endure all the dangers and discomforts of a foreign campaign on short rations. They had cause enough to search the sea with their glasses for Lord Holland's fleet. But Buckingham had greater cause, and more to suffer. He did not spare his body. He shared the men's sufferings, lay with them in open boats in winter nights of storm, stood by them in the trenches within the fire of the enemy's guns, and had no better food than they, nor more of it. And all this meant more to him in self-denial than to men who had never feasted at York House and Whitehall,

* William Bold to Nicolas.

† W. Lewis to Nicolas.

who had not dazzled London, Paris, and Madrid with a magnificence of dress, who had not for years lived the luxurious life of a great courtier, the favourite of kings, the darling of dame fortune. But to Buckingham this physical stress and suffering could have been as nothing to the stress and suffering of a proud spirit. We cannot see into the drama of his soul during those dark days, but it must have been a great tragedy. His pride was humiliated, his hopes of fame and glory shattered, his personal reputation endangered by great and irredeemable failure. The men searched the sea for Lord Holland's fleet with their glasses. Buckingham must have searched the sea with his very soul. At night he must have prayed, and we know he did pray, that those ships might come sailing through the darkness. At dawn he found his prayers unanswered. Yet, as we have said, no angry word escaped from him, no word of bitter complaint or dark despair. Not even his face showed to his soldiers any gloom or lack of confidence in ultimate success, and every one of the men who served with him and wrote a memorial of those months in the Isle of Rhé bear witness to the seeming cheerfulness, the constant courtesy and kindness, the continual courage of their general. Truly, Buckingham had the makings of a great soldier.

But fortune was against him. The very winds were his enemies. He had held on until St. Martin's was at the last gasp of hunger, in spite of the relief-ships which had brought new stores. If only Holland and Wilmot had not been beaten back by furious storms, if, even after the miserable delays caused by the incompetence and roguery of officials, they had got away from Plymouth when they had first started with a fair breeze, Buckingham's long endurance would not have been in vain, and St. Martin's would have been compelled, by the laws of nature, to capitulate.

But history was written differently. During the delay of Holland's fleet, a French army under Marshal Schomberg was marching to the coast, and, as each day passed, Buckingham was threatened with more imminent danger. It came very close to him when two thousand men passed over the strait to the island of Rhé, and strengthened the little fort of Prée, which Buckingham had left unattacked and uncaptured, not believing it advisable to divide his forces. With its new garrison it was

now a formidable position at his rear, and in a little while, when Schomberg and a great army would cross over from the mainland, Buckingham would be surrounded with a circle of fire. When the situation developed, and still Lord Holland did not come, Buckingham could not hide from himself that the game was up, and his officers forced home the truth upon him. In anguish of spirit he saw himself compelled to evacuate the island which had cost him months of travail and misery. But Buckingham had not changed his character, though danger had toughened his manhood. Though it cost him his life he would make one desperate venture, rather than retreat tamely and ignominiously. In the earlier stages of the siege he had declared that the fort of St. Martin's was too strong to take by assault. Now hearing that Toiras the governor had only 500 men strong enough to bear arms, the others being skeletons and scarecrows, he gave orders for the scaling ladders to be brought up, and for the men to leave their trenches for a combined attack. This was made on the morning of the 27th of October. It was a bloody business and a great disaster. Toiras had had full warning of the threatened assault, and though it was true his men were weak with hunger, the rocks beneath them and the walls above were strong and impregnable. The scaling ladders were short and useless, and though the English officers and men flung themselves upon the fortress with determined courage, they could not scale the height in the storm of shot that poured down upon them. Many brave gentlemen were killed and wounded, and many men were left in their death agony upon the rocky ledges, when Buckingham at last sounded the retreat.

Prudence would have counselled an immediate evacuation of the island, for Marshal Schomberg had now crossed over to the island with about 6000 men, and had joined the garrison of La Prée. Not many hours would pass before he marched upon the English. Cowardice would have suggested that to save the healthy men they should leave behind the wounded, and there were some to counsel this. But Buckingham was not distinguished by prudence, and he was no coward. He refused to leave the wounded, and two days were spent in getting his disabled men on board ship, while a wooden bridge was constructed across the marshes to the narrow strait leading to the

little isle of Loix, which was to be the embarking place of the troops. If we may believe Sir Pierce Crosby, one of the colonels, in these last hours the camp was distracted by divided counsels, and the assault on the fort, as well as the work of evacuation, was hampered by a sullen and almost mutinous soldiery.

"It is not to be doubted," he says, "that the Duke had both courage, munificence, and industry enough, together with many other excellent parts which in time would make him a renowned general. And his prime officers, undervaluing his directions because of his inexperience, and taking a boldness in regard of his lenity to delinquents, did not only fail to co-operate with him, but by giving out that he cared but to expose them all for his own vain-glory had infused into a great part of the army a mutinous disposition, insomuch as whatsoever was directed to making our longer abode or any attempt to be made upon the enemy was either cried down, or so slowly and negligently executed as it took none effect. For instance, when it was resolved in council that the little fort should be besieged, they obstinately declined it.* On the other side, whatever tended to the retreat was acted with all possible expedition; as, for example, the shipping of all the brass cannon, whereunto they had by surprise gotten his consent before the assault, by himself often repented of. In this distraction of affairs, the Duke was forced to resort to new and private counsels, by which he was then so guided that Dulbier, one author thereof, writing to his friend in Holland, used these words, '*L'ignorance et la dissention qu'est entre les Anglois, m'a fait vendre les coquilles a bon marché.*'"

One fatal precaution was that taken to ensure the safety of the retreat, and Viscount Wimbledon's words of warning, which have already been quoted, were forgotten. The end of the bridge on the little island of Loix was guarded by an entrenchment, but the other end of the bridge on the Isle of Rhé was left unfortified, and defended only by a small body of horsemen. It is always, as Wimbledon pointed out, an extreme danger to convey a great mass of troops over a narrow passage, with a

* As Gardiner says, this cannot refer to the original question of besieging La Prée, but to some later resolution, probably when the French were beginning to land.

strong enemy in the neighbourhood, and when Marshal Schomberg came up with his army he saw this weak spot in the English dispositions. As soon as three regiments had passed over, the French charged the small body of English horsemen guarding it, and forced them into headlong retreat. Dashing into the infantry they turned the regiments into terrible confusion, and a panic ensued, in which, regardless of all order and discipline, the men surged towards the bridge, fighting with each other in their desperate endeavour to escape. Into this mass of terror-stricken humanity the French musketeers now poured a deadly fire, shooting down our men like sheep. Even this was not the worst of the tragedy. The Rochellese volunteers, who were taking part in this retreat, had found a way round by some salt-pits, and now, in their haste to cross the bridge, forced themselves into the flank of Sir Alexander Brett's regiment, then crossing over, so that the passage was still more congested, and the enemy, says Sir Pierce Crosby, "had the killing, taking, and drowning of our men at his pleasure." The panic-stricken English soldiers were unable to return the enemy's fire without the risk of shooting down their own comrades. It is a miracle that so many escaped, though the slaughter accounted for at least a thousand lives. According to the French, they killed two thousand at this time, and it is the more likely figure. Perhaps the French, who are not without humanity, grew a little tired of mere massacre, and allowed some of the shattered regiments to cross that bridge of death without further punishment. Even on the other side, the men were so hag-ridden with fright that in their wild stampede they swept away the soldiers who were guarding the entrenchment. But the officers succeeded in rallying them, and drove back the enemy who followed. In the night, or early next morning, they set fire to the bridge, and now in comparative safety and at leisure, the troops were got on board the fleet, which set sail on November 8. They numbered 2,989 wounded, ragged, and half-starved scarecrows, a miserable remnant of those 6,884 soldiers who, on October 20, drew pay at St. Martin's.*

Who was to blame? Buckingham takes the responsibility, but there is reason to believe that the fault was due to his subordinate officers. Crosby, who took part in the disaster,

* Domestic State Papers.

says distinctly that the failure to guard the bridge was "an error never to be sufficiently condemned in the colonel-general and the sergeant-major-general, to whom the Duke committed the retreat."

But Buckingham could not, and, to do him justice did not, shelter himself behind his subordinates, however much they were directly to blame. Upon his shoulders, as the leader of the campaign, rest the failure and the tragedy, and it was a heavy burden. In that short voyage, with every breath of wind bearing him homeward to a people clamorous for vengeance, to enemies no less cruel and much less chivalrous than the French soldiers, who would at least give him credit for his courage, he must have been whipped by bitter and poignant thoughts, by the sting of wounded pride, by the lash of unavailing regret. To a man of pride who had gone out with high hopes this failure was worse than death, and he may well have wished that he had died with those officers and men whose blood had coloured the salt-marshes of Rhé. He had not tried to escape that death. In that bloody retreat he had been the last to cross the bridge, but as he stood sword in hand shouting to his cowards, he was scatheless among the bullets. At least no man could deny his personal heroism.

It was characteristic of Buckingham that he should bury his thoughts of failure by new schemes of daring enterprise, and before he reached the English shore he was already dreaming of an attack upon Calais. He had one great consolation. The English people in their blind prejudice might howl at him, blind to their own lack of patriotism in denying the supplies, the lack of which had been the chief cause of his failure, but his King would still have faith in him, knowing all that he had suffered and braved, and acknowledging how ill-supported he had been. He met Holland's fleet on the highway of the sea, but there was now no joy in the sight of those sails. They had come too late.

CHAPTER XIV

THE DUKE AT HOME AGAIN

BUCKINGHAM was not mistaken as to the opinion of his King. As soon as he landed at Portsmouth he received a letter from Charles, by the hands of Endymion Porter, his own friend and servant.

"STENIE" (wrote Charles),

"I have written to you by Will Murray, and Montgomery, having sent them to Plymouth, thinking you would have landed there; but understanding of your coming to Portsmouth, I have sent Porter to assure you our misfortune has been not to send you supplies in time, that all honest men cannot but judge that you have done past expectation, and (if a man may say it) beyond possibility. Your letter, and my lord of Westmeath's relation, has much comforted me (the first news of your retreat being far worse than, I thank God, it is) but principally to see how nobly thou carriest it, considering the rest of your actions. As for your design upon Calais, I much approve of it; let me know what is necessary for it, and I shall see it provided with all diligence; and for secrecy, I shall speak of it to no living soul but to Jack Epslie, whom I have sent for. So referring myself to the bearer, I rest,

"Your loving, &c.,

"CHARLES

"Wednesday night.

"You cannot come before you are welcome, which I leave to you; the sooner, I think, the better, at least best pleasing for me."

Buckingham did not hurry at once to the Court, for there

was much to do in Portsmouth in providing for the needs of his soldiers and seamen. It was while engaged in this business that he had a letter from his Duchess, showing that her heart was still beating for him, and craved to welcome him with her love.

"MY LORD" (she wrote),

"Since I heard the news of your landing, I have been still every hour looking for you, that I cannot now till I see you, sleep in the nights, for every minute, if I do hear any noise, I think it is one from you, to tell me the happy news what day I shall see you, for I confess I long for it with much impatience. I was in great hope that the business you had to do at Portsmouth would 'a been done in a day, and then I should 'a seen you here to-morrow, but now I cannot tell when to expect you. My Lord, there has been such ill reports made of the great loss you have had, by the man that came first, as your friends desire you would come to clear all, with all speed. You may leave some of the Lords there to see what you give order for done, and you need not stay yourself any longer. Thus beseeching you to come hither on Sunday or Monday, without all fail,

"I rest your

"true loving and obedient wife,

"K. BUCKINGHAM

"Mr. Maule desires you to come to the King, though you stay but one night, for they were never so busy as now."

So Buckingham rode on his way to London, comforted by the thought that there were at least two people in the world who loved him, his King and his good wife. There were others, for though there was a great outcry of indignation against him when the first news of disaster leaked out, with many wild exaggerations, his many friends at Court were more disposed to give credit to his great gallantry than to blame him for his failure. The continuance of the King's favour towards him made him still the most powerful man in England, and therefore still to be flattered, but his wonderful personality drew many hearts with sincere affection towards him.

But these were anxious for his personal safety at home. There could be no denying that the loss of so many men, and

the return without victory to justify such bloodshed, had inflamed the people against him, and made them more than ever ready to put the blame of all the troubles of the country to his account. Even men of breeding were passionate against him as the cause of this blow to our national prestige and of the massacre of men at the bridge.

"The disorder and confusion," wrote Denzil Holles to his brother-in-law Wentworth, "was so great, the truth is no man can tell what was done. This only every man knows, that since England was England it received not so dishonourable a blow."

When men of education and rank were speaking thus passionately, it is not to be wondered at that among the common people there was more brutal speech, full of threats against the Duke. When Buckingham set out from Plymouth he was told that a plot had been formed to murder him on his way to London. Young Lord Fielding, his sister Susan's son, who rode with him, begged him to change clothes with him so that the Duke might be guarded against assassination.* It was a brave and chivalrous offer on the part of a young man, and Buckingham was touched with such love for him. But he refused to take any precautions, vowing that if his enemies believed him to be afraid of danger he would never be safe.

This time he came to his journey's end without the attempt being made on his life, and at Whitehall Charles received him with as much honour and affection as though he had returned as a conquering hero.

Buckingham gave a full narrative of the campaign on the Isle of Rhé, of the attempt on the fort, the retreat and embarkation, to the King and the Lords assembled at Whitehall. According to some accounts, as we have seen, he had some cause of complaint against his officers and men during the last days in the island, but his natural desire not to paint the picture of his disaster in blacker colours than must inevitably appear, and his generous spirit which prompted him to give full praise to comrades-in-arms, made him overlook such failings and speak only in gratitude of their long-suffering and good service.

Lord Conway, writing to his son Edward on November 20, says, he "delivered so clear an account of the passages, descending even to the good and bold actions of the private

* Sir Henry Wotton's Memoirs.

soldiers, and exhibited the great patience of the army, and the fair opportunity offered by turning their sufferings into glory, as if these virtues had been seconded with the power and succour designed for it. The Duke named every officer in such manner that every hearer was stirred up to give commendations, and if officers and soldiers have thankfulness equal to the honour and obligation done them by the Duke, they will live with their swords or die with them in their hands to pay him that duty. The King commands Sir Edward to express to both officers and soldiers that his Majesty takes in every good part the faith and courage they have made appear." *

These words from the King must have cheered the officers, who were mostly gentlemen with private means, and could therefore pay for their own creature comforts in return for royal compliments ; but to the soldiers and seamen solid wages would have been more acceptable than fine words. The condition of the men returned from Rochelle was deplorable. Sir James Bagg, the paymaster, in his reports to Buckingham, who was now with the Court, reveals their pitiful plight. Apart from Lord Holland's men, who had clothes, the others were in an almost naked condition, and the twelve hundred sick and wounded billeted at Plymouth were in a horrible state, spreading a deadly infection among all who came in contact with them, and numbers of them falling down dead in the streets. The Duke had left £3500 in Bagg's hands, but this was but a beggarly pittance to pay for the wants of so many starving and sick creatures. Similar reports reached Buckingham and the Navy Commissioners daily from other officers. On November 29, Sir William Courtney reported to Lord Conway that he had billeted Lord Holland's companies in Cornwall, and those from Rhé in Devonshire, but they were in desperate need of clothes. "Without the latter," he said, "the men will die." He urged the necessity of sending down a commissary with a supply of this clothing. Sir Henry Mervyn, who was under sailing orders, writes to Nicolas on December 12, that "all things are so out of order that we cannot put to sea so suddenly as we had written." There is a great contagion among the ships, five hundred men having been buried since the coming in of the fleet. The condition of the poorer sailors, he reports, is most miserable. Winter

* Domestic State Papers.

employment will cut out more than the enemy unless there be better provision of clothes for them.

Buckingham was not callous to the sufferings of the men, and in answer to the pressing demands for money from his officers he sent down frequent sums to Sir James Bagg and others, not only using every endeavour to obtain money from the Treasury, but dipping deeply into his private purse. But the Treasury was utterly exhausted after the expense of fitting out Holland's fleet without Parliamentary aid, and the cost of maintaining the navy and army in a condition for active service was so enormous that the few thousands of pounds that could be raised were merely sufficient to enable the officers to keep their men from a general mutiny. In the Domestic State Papers a note is given of "the present charge of the fleet and army," and the figures help one to realize the strain upon the resources of the impoverished Government. There were 7,557 landsmen and 4,000 seamen. "Total weekly charge, £3862. Arrears due to the officers of the navy and ordnance, £251,361. Sum needed for setting forth a fleet of 50 sail in the spring, £110,000, of which one-half must be presently [*i.e.* immediately] furnished." Such vast sums (and it will be noticed that they do not include the wages of the soldiers and seamen) were beyond the very dreams of the Privy Council, who were carrying on the administration in a hand-to-mouth way. Yet both the King and Buckingham were determined to refit the fleet and raise an even larger army in order to retrieve the first failure at Rochelle. Buckingham hoped to redeem his defeat, and Charles felt himself in honour bound to succour the unfortunate Rochellese, who were in a more desperate plight than ever. A deputation came from them with news that Toiras, the Governor of Rochelle, had been superseded, and that Richelieu, the great cardinal, was personally superintending the siege, and was building two great piers into the sea, which, when finished, would cut off all hope of relief from the besieged city.

Buckingham, with the authority of the King and Council, decided to despatch at once his brother-in-law, the Earl of Denbigh, with a small fleet of store-ships, in order to relieve the immediate wants of Rochelle, while he himself reorganized the forces and prepared a more formidable expedition. But everything worked against him, and he built great castles of hope

upon rotten foundations, while the very winds of heaven battered against them. The ships returned from Rhé were foul and leaky, and great storms blowing off the English coast wrecked and damaged the best of a thoroughly bad fleet.

Lord Denbigh, on board the *Victory*, writing to Buckingham on November 28th, reports that on the night of the 26th, there "arose so great a storm, that in Hamoaze, which is held for one of the most secure harbours in the kingdom, and where never ship was heard to have been lost, fifteen or sixteen of the fleet were driven on the rocks, among which the *Bonaventure* and *Esperance* are, it is to be feared, not to be recovered." In Catwater five, and one of them the *Rainbow*, were bilged and, he doubts, lost. The *Nonsuch* cut her mainmast by the board; the *Victory* drove, with four anchors ahead, within half a cable's length of the shore, and so also the *Happy Entrance*. On December 5th, Lord Holland, writing to the Duke from Portsmouth, says that to-morrow they will give account of what ships will be fit to set to sea. He fears they will be but few, most of them having leaks or other defects not to be repaired there, where there is no dock, "which is a great omission in some of our great officers. The sooner the ships are sent to the Thames the better, or, what with the sick and the runaways, they will not be sufficiently manned."

In the middle of December, Sir James Bagg, the treasurer of the army, was superseded by Captain Mason, who complained bitterly that he could not get out of Bagg's hands the money sent down by the Duke to pay for the soldiers' billets. He hoped to prevail on the country people to supply the men with shirts, shoes, and stockings, on assurance of first payment. Mason did not mince matters with the Duke. His language was as strong as the awful situation of the soldiers and seamen warranted a man of heart and conscience. "Unless your Grace procures money for the troops," he wrote, "I must expect a purgatory, if not hellish incessant torment."

Before Bagg relinquished his office he reported that there were six or seven hundred runaways from the ranks. These were increased day by day, and death roamed the streets of Portsmouth and Plymouth, and the decks of the foul ships in the harbours. Sir Henry Mervyn, writing to Nicolas on December 23, says, that soon the King will have more ships

than sailors. They send twenty or thirty sick men ashore daily, and all the ships are so infectious, that he fears if they hold the sea one month they shall not bring men home to moor these vessels. Endeavours have been made to purify the *Vanguard*, in spite of all which is "so noisesome and ill-savouring," that were it not to obey the Duke, he would rather quit his employment than go to sea in her. On January 2 he writes again to Buckingham, and at the same time to Nicolas, protesting against the delay in sending clothes. "The men are so naked they cannot undertake their duties at sea. In harbour they fall hourly sick, and daily die in all our ships." The disease bred among them is so frightfully infectious that they spread it through the houses in which they are billeted, the inhabitants themselves dying of this plague.

One may guess at the horror with which the householders in Devon and Cornwall found themselves compelled to receive into their homes, with but a poor chance of payment, these naked, pestilential, half-savage soldiers and seamen, who behaved like brutes, and were indeed but little better than brutes, in a condition which was a degradation of their humanity. Many of them, Irish and Scottish recruits, were practically foreigners, without the slightest respect for the property or persons of those in whose houses they were forcibly billeted. The reports and despatches in the State Papers relate many horrible stories of their ill conduct and violent behaviour, which at last became so intolerable to the countryside that many people turned out the men to starve in the streets, and a great groan of indignation and rage rose against this infamous law of billeting, mostly without payment. The following complaint, addressed to the Council by the people of Devonshire and Cornwall, is typical of hundreds that poured in from every side. "What!" they said, "will his Majesty make war without provision of treasure, or must our county bear the charge for all England? Is it not enough that we undergo the trouble of the insolent soldiers in our houses, their robberies and other misdemeanours, but that we must maintain them, too, at our own cost?"

Buckingham, to whom these things were reported day by day, realized, what Charles was loth to realize, that it was impossible to proceed with his plans in the face of those appalling facts, upon the existing system of government, and that

only by summoning a Parliament and obtaining subsidies could they avert ruin and revolution.

Though he had been impeached by the last Parliament, which had been dissolved by the King to rescue him from the fierce attacks of the Commons, he had the courage and audacity to appeal once more to the representatives of the people. Supremely confident in the righteousness of his own actions and intentions, he did not doubt that the truth, as he believed it, would prevail over passion and prejudice, and that the patriotism of the nation would respond to an appeal for aid in a great crisis, or, if he was mistaken, he was willing to risk his own safety on the cause of the country's honour. He flung himself on his knees before Charles one day in the bedchamber with an earnest petition for the summoning of a Parliament, saying that "if he himself were found worthy of death, let them not spare him." * Then at the Council Board he made the same proposal. Gardiner, quoting one of the Venetian ambassador's (Contarini's) despatches to the Doge, says that, "the Councillors knew not what to say when they heard the great Duke pleading for once in vain. They fancied there was some collusion, and that the scene had been pre-arranged for the purpose of winning popularity for the favourite. Then was seen the effect of such predominance as Buckingham's upon the men whom he had trained to flatter, not to counsel. Not a man ventured to open his mouth to give advice. The sovereign and his favourite were isolated at the council board, as they were in the nation."

A new and unheard-of expedient was adopted to raise money without Parliamentary aid. Charles resolved to mortgage or sell the Crown lands, and in this way a sum of £263,000 was obtained. It was a blessed relief to the long period of penury at Court, and with ready money in hand new schemes were put forward to secure order in the kingdom and reorganize the army and navy. Buckingham, who seems to have feared a popular insurrection at home (and the constant mutinies of the seamen and soldiers, as well as the disaffection of the country generally made such a fear reasonable), proposed the establishment of a permanent standing army of 20,000 men. Dalbier was to be sent over to Germany with Sir William Balfour to bring over

* Mead to Stuteville.

1000 German horse, and the soldiers already called out for active service were to be reinforced by 2000 Scottish and 2000 Irish infantry. This project was the cause of black suspicion against the Duke, who, by the common people, was believed to have designs of becoming a military dictator, and crushing them under the heel of an iron despotism. Even men of superior intelligence were not without grave suspicions that Charles intended to coerce his subjects into fresh taxation by the power of the sword. It is generally acknowledged now, however, that the King and Buckingham had no sinister purpose in thus establishing a strong standing army, this being proved by the fact that at the same time the yeomanry of the ten shires nearest London were called out for review, these men being of the very class who would be most likely to draw their swords in defence of the nation's liberty. It was really nothing but a military plan for the purpose of keeping a strong force in readiness for immediate foreign service, but in view of the condition of the country, and the growing storm of indignation against billeting, it showed a deplorable lack of common sense and political intelligence.

Towards the end of January fresh pressure was brought to bear upon the King to summon a Parliament, and a deputation of Lords gave their personal guarantee that if the King granted this universal desire of the people, there would be no further proceedings in the impeachment of the Duke of Buckingham.

The Duke himself again threw the weight of his personal influence on to the side of a Parliamentary government, and at a late hour on the night of January 30th, 1628, the King gave way, and orders were given for the issue of writs, the date for the assembling of Parliament being fixed for March 17th.

Buckingham, who believed that now his impeachment was dropped he would find his military policy supported by new subsidies voted by the Commons in return for his advocacy of their liberties, was in a happier frame of mind than he had enjoyed for many months, and there now came to him a great personal joy. It will be remembered that his first son, the little Earl of Coventry, had died in infancy—a blow which had caused him profound grief. On Wednesday afternoon, the 1st of February, the day after the people heard the glad news that a Parliament was again to meet, another son and heir was born

to him, and "for joy thereof," writes Mead, "the bells of Westminster and St. Martin's-in-the-Field rung full merrily." The child was christened a week later at Wallingford House, the King and the Earl of Suffolk being godfathers, and the Queen godmother by her deputy the Duchess of Richmond. "His Majesty came thither apparelled in a long soldier's coat, all covered with gold lace, and his hair all gaufred and frizzled, which he never used before." The babe that then lay "puking and miking" became that second Duke of Buckingham whose erratic genius and wild adventures are perhaps more familiar to students of history and literature than the character and career of his father.

CHAPTER XV

THE KING'S THIRD PARLIAMENT

ALTHOUGH the King had given way to the persuasions of the Duke and other great Lords in summoning Parliament, he had not yet learnt the lesson that the English people declined to be taxed in any form whatever without the consent of their representatives, and he resorted to several extraordinary expedients to raise money in an unparliamentary way, under the pretext that it was necessary for a fleet to put to sea without delay, owing to the imminent peril of Rochelle, and the danger of an invasion of this country by France and Spain. Previously the ships had been mainly provided by the port towns and the maritime counties, but now he proposed to extend this levying of ship-money, as it was called, in all the shires. Writs were issued for that purpose, but the reception of them in the counties occasioned such a widespread indignation, several of the county Lieutenants, such as Lord Northampton and the Earl of Banbury, flatly refusing to carry out their instructions, and protests against the illegality of the tax being raised on every side, that for once Charles took warning by those ominous signs of resistance and withdrew his orders. For the time being, therefore, ship-money was abandoned, but, as all students of history know, was remembered later by the King, with disastrous and never-to-be-forgotten results. In the meanwhile, Denbigh, who was to have put to sea, was delayed in the same way as Holland and Wilmot in the preceding years; and the condition of the seamen, the mutinous behaviour and desertions of the soldiers, and the disorder and violence occasioned by the billeting of those men in private houses, had reached such a degree of evil that the country was seething with political passion, almost approaching a revolution.

Such was the state of things when Parliament met on March

17th, opened with full and magnificent ceremony by the King, attended by the great officers of State and the Household, including Buckingham, who led his Majesty's spare horse. There was to be, it seemed, a general amnesty on both sides. The King permitted the return of the Earl of Bristol, the Earl of Lincoln, Lord Arundel, Archbishop Abbot, and Williams, the late Lord Keeper, who had been in disgrace and under arrest, to return to their places in the Upper Chamber, and in the Lower House there was not a murmur about proceeding with the impeachment of the Duke, though all his old enemies had been returned again to Parliament. But as far as the Commons were concerned, this silence about Buckingham, whom they had denounced as the evil genius of the kingdom, was ominous of greater peril to the prerogatives claimed by the Crown. Eliot, Wentworth, Philips, Coke, Selden, and the other leaders of the Commons, had during the past six months realized, not without fear and trembling, that one greater than Buckingham was responsible for the abuse of liberty and the false principles of government, of which the effects were only too evident in misery and oppression. Not Buckingham, but the King himself was the cause of the nation's troubles; and it was not now a question of impeaching a minister, but of compelling the sovereign himself to conform to the constitution violated in defiance of all the liberties of the people gained through centuries of strife.

By one of the strangest paradoxes of history, the leader of the House of Commons in this Parliament of 1628 was Wentworth, who afterwards as Lord Strafford, "as every schoolboy knows" (in the words of Macaulay, whose ignorance of this great character was as colossal as his insolence towards him), was sent to the scaffold for his "thorough" way of upholding the powers of the Crown, and governing the country with iron discipline. The day will come when history must reverse its verdict upon Wentworth. Charles has been condemned in every text-book for his cowardice in abandoning his minister, and the condemnation is just, but more severe should be the condemnation of the English people, who, forgetting all they owed to this courageous champion of their freedom, the author of the Petition of Right, hounded him to the block. Macaulay's wild and wanton words with which he stabbed Wentworth's name and fame, as the murderer of his first wife, the debaucher

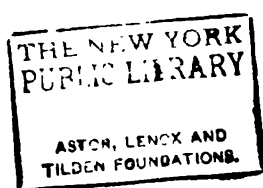
of women, "the wicked earl," the first Englishman to whom a peerage was a "sacrament of infamy," the "lost Archangel, the Satan of the apostacy," recoil upon his own head, and those who know anything of Strafford now, know that he was a noble gentleman, of infinite tenderness towards his family, of strict and pure morality, of high ideals from which he never swerved, of dauntless courage, of untainted patriotism, the wisest governor Ireland has ever had, and the leader of the House in that great Parliamentary struggle of 1628, when he pledged himself "to vindicate—what? New things? No! our ancient, sober, and vital liberties! by reinforcing of the ancient laws made by our ancestors; by setting such a stamp upon them as no licentious spirit shall dare hereafter to enter upon them."

History has not yet done justice to that great drama of 1628, when Wentworth, Eliot, Selden, and Coke reasserted the old liberties with a new faith; nor has history made the characters of those men live in the imagination of the English people as the men of the French Revolution have been given an immortality. Yet they were hardly less remarkable. Wentworth's political career is a curious parallel to that of Mirabeau, though in purity of character he was a nobler Mirabeau. They have both suffered from the stupid ignorance of people who cannot realize that apparent inconsistency is sometimes the greatest proof of sincerity. Mirabeau was a great champion of liberty, yet he allied himself with the Crown because he hated anarchy. So it was with Wentworth. Sir John Eliot may be compared to Robespierre, though he was more of a gentleman, less of the doctrinaire, and not bloodthirsty. He was a convinced democrat, and believed in the majesty of the people as much as Wentworth believed in the constitutional monarchy, and in his fiery eloquence appealing always to first principles and to the sovereign liberty of man, he had much in common with the forerunners of the great Revolution which changed the face of Europe a century and a half later. And Sir Edward Coke—he is hardly known by the average Englishman, even by the well-read Englishman, yet there has hardly lived in this country a man of more remarkable character than that dogged violent old man, as sullen and ferocious as a bulldog, violent and brutal in his speech, worshipping the letter of the law of which he was a master, supreme in his knowledge of old



SIR EDWARD COKE

AFTER A PORTRAIT BY CORNELIUS JANSSEN VAN CEULEN



statutes and charters of liberty. Seventeenth-century England owed him more than has been acknowledged, for though Wentworth and Eliot upheld the ideals of liberty, differing in their principles, but working together for the same purpose, it was Coke's genius as a lawyer that bore down all opposition to the new charter of liberty set forth in the Petition of Right.

The narrative of the Parliament of 1628 belongs more to the history of England than to the life of Buckingham. The Duke took but little part in it, for the fight was in the Commons, and he was absorbed in military and political administration.

It is enough to recall the main features of this Parliament so far as they affected his life and purpose. In his speech to his Commons, Charles gave them clearly to understand that he had summoned them for but one reason. He wanted money to carry on his Government and the war, and he bade them pass subsidies sufficient for his needs. They ignored his demand, and proceeded to discuss grievances—the wrongful imprisonment of citizens without trial, the illegal attempts at taxation, the abuses arising from the billeting of soldiers in the houses of private citizens with or without payment, the violation of the liberties of the subject by seizing men to serve unwillingly in the army and navy. The debates should be read in full by every student of history, for they rose to great heights of eloquence when Eliot was on fire with passion for freedom, and when Wentworth's solemn oratory defined the liberties of both Crown and people. They talked on for days and weeks, and in this discussion of grievances supplies were not considered. There is no doubt that Charles, though passionate with anger, was also deeply alarmed. The battle of words in the House was like the thunder of guns threatening the supremacy of the Crown. He sent down word that he was ready to redress grievances if they would only enable him to meet his expenses. By Wentworth's influence the House then prepared to vote a large supply. Wentworth was sincerely anxious to make provision for the defence of the kingdom, provided the liberties of the nation were secured. Unlike Eliot, who wanted to rake up past evils, and discuss the details of foreign policy, he was anxious to restore order in the kingdom by strengthening the Government and creating new checks to prevent future abuses. He would have nothing

to do with regulating the way in which the money should be spent. Let the King have his supplies with the responsibility of them, and then let him, in return, be compelled to obey the laws of the constitution summed up in new resolutions based on ancient rights. They must be cautious that the actual grants did not precede the redress of grievances.

He carried the House with him, and then immediately proceeded to vote five subsidies. Eliot's voice, protesting against this liberality, was drowned by the general consent of the other members. When Sir John Coke, one of the secretaries of State, carried the news to the King, Charles was so astonished that he could hardly believe it. "Then his Majesty expressed wonderful joy and contentment, saying he was more happy than any of the Kings his predecessors ; and then, asking Sir John Coke further, by how many voices he carried it, he answered *but by one voice*. Whereat his majesty, being at first somewhat appalled, Sir John replied, his Majesty had so much the greater cause of joy, the whole house being so unanimous, as they made all but one voice : at which, they say, his Majesty wept." *

Buckingham was as much rejoiced as the King, for the promise of the subsidies was like a golden vision to him in his present desperate want of means to support the army and navy. At the Council table, in the presence of the King, he made a speech in which he expressed his great joy with extraordinary emotion and high-flown eloquence.

"Sir," he said, "methinks I behold you a great King, for love is greater than Majesty ; opinion that the people loved you not, had almost lost you in the opinion of the world ; but this day makes you appear as you are, a glorious King, loved at home, and now to be feared abroad ; this falling out so happily, give me leave, I beseech you, to be a humble suitor to your Majesty ; *i.e.* for myself that I who have had the honour to be your favourite may now give up that title unto them, they to be your favourites, and I your servant. My second suit is that they having done also well you will account of them as one ; a body of many members, but all of one heart : opinion might have made them differ, but affection did move them all to join with like love in the great gift ; for proportion, although it be less than your occasions may ask, yet it is more than our

* Mead to Stateville.

subjects did give in so short a time ; nor am I persuaded it will rest there, for this is but as an earnest of your affections, to let you see, and the world know, what subjects you have, that when the honour and the good of the State is engaged, and aid asked in the ordinary way of Parliament you cannot want. This is not the gift of five subsidies alone, but of a mine of subsidies that lieth in their hearts."

After more of this rather wordy rhetoric in the spirit of his time, Buckingham alluded to his own relations with the House :

"Now, Sir, to open my heart, and to ease my grief, please you to pardon me a word more ; I must confess I have long lived in pain, they hath given me no rest, favours and fortune no content, such hath been my secret sorrows, to be thought the man of separation, and that divided the king from his people, and turn from him ; but I hope it shall appear, they were some mistaken minds, that would have made me the evil spirit, that walketh between a good master and loyal people, by ill offices ; whereas by your Majesty's favour, I shall ever endeavour to approve myself a good spirit, breathing nothing but the best of services to them all. Therefore this day I account more blessed to me than my birth, to see myself able to serve them, to see you brought in love with Parliament, to see a Parliament express such love for you ; and God'so love me and mine, as I joy to see this day."*

There is no reason to doubt the ring of real emotion in this speech. After so many grievous troubles it seemed to both Charles and Buckingham that they were to be supported in future by the people and the representatives of the people. Yet Buckingham's speech was hardly spoken before it brought him trouble, for when Secretary Coke returned the King's answer and thanks to the Commons, he brought down a severe rebuke upon himself for reporting at the same time these words of the Duke. Sir John Eliot protested that it was contrary to privilege that a Royal message to the Commons should be intermingled with words by a subject, and Buckingham was given to understand that though the House had tacitly abandoned their impeachment of him, they had no better love for him.

The King also was grievously disappointed in his expectation of the immediate granting of the promised supplies, and deeply

* Rushworth.

wounded when he found that the Commons would not actually pass them until the Bill which afterwards became the Petition of Right had received his formal assent. He endeavoured to elude the matter by expressing in general words that right should be done according to the laws, and that his subjects should have no reason to complain of wrongs or oppressions. He sent a message desiring to know whether they would trust to his goodness and rely on his promise or not? It was an embarrassing question, for they had trusted the King's promise before, without avail. A debate took place, in which it was resolved that the King's general word was not a sufficient answer. In the mean time the resolution of the Commons had been submitted to the Lords, and Buckingham was at last able to defend what he thought were the King's interests in this great political strife. By his influence the Lords endeavoured to water down the resolutions of the Commons by an additional clause, in which the King's "Sovereign power" was left untouched. It was a parallel to the "Veto" for which Mirabeau fought in the French Revolution, thereby arousing the hostility of the republicans, who accused him of selling himself to the Royalists. This addition being sent back to the Commons was received by them with scorn and indignation as yielding everything they were struggling for. Sir Edward Coke in his blunt way declared that "to speak plainly, it will overthrow all our Petition; it trenches to all parts of it. . . . I know that Prerogative is part of the Law, but Sovereign Power is no Parliamentary word. In my opinion it weakens Magna Charta, and all our statutes. . . . Magna Charta is such a fellow that he will have no Sovereign. I wonder this Sovereign was not in Magna Charta or in the confirmation of it. If we grant this, by implication we give a Sovereign power above all these laws."

Sir Thomas Wentworth, though he was a firm upholder of the King's authority according to the constitution, now also agreed that this additional clause would wreck the whole spirit of the Petition of Right, by giving the King power to override all its provisions. "If we do admit of this addition," he said, "we shall have the subject worse than we found him, and we shall have little thanks for all our labour when we come home. Let us leave all power to his Majesty to punish malefactors; but these laws are not acquainted with Sovereign Power; we

desire no new King, but nor do we offer to trench on his Majesty's prerogative ; we may not recede from this Petition either in part or whole. To add a saving is not safe ; doubtful words may beget ill construction, and the words are not only doubtful words, but words unknown to us, and never used in any Act or Petition before."

Stormy debates and lengthy conferences between the two Houses followed, and Buckingham was unable to carry the Lords with him any further, in his attempt to secure the King's absolute autocracy. Eventually the peers agreed to the resolution of the Commons, and the Petition of Right was adopted without a single essential alteration.

Another message was now received from the King "that his Majesty was resolved neither to add to nor alter the answer he had given them," that is, a general promise to redress grievances and act according to the law.

This reply after all their labours stirred up an extraordinary demonstration of anger in the Lower House, and, suspecting, without cause, that the King's behaviour was due to the influence of Buckingham, they vented their rage upon him, as the cause of all the disasters and ill-government of the past years. These words coming to the King's ears, he sent a further message "absolutely forbidding them to meddle with the Government or any of his Majesty's ministers, but if they meant to have this session, forthwith to finish what they had begun" [that is, the passing of the subsidies], "otherwise his Majesty would dismiss them."

This threat of a dissolution before the Petition of Right had been granted caused a feeling of intense grief among the men who had been inspired by a great and patriotic fervour to re-enact the liberties gained by their forefathers.

"Then appeared such a spectacle of passions, as the like had seldom been seen in such an assembly, some weeping, some expostulating, some prophesying of the fatal ruin of our kingdom, some playing the divines, in comparing their own and country's ruins, which drew those judgments upon us ; some finding, as it were, fault with those that wept, and expressing their bold and courageous resolutions against the enemies of the King and kingdom." *

* Mead to Stateville.

There was only one enemy in their mind—poor Buckingham, who but a few days before had been praising them so eloquently.

Sir Robert Phelips, in a voice broken with emotion, spoke despairingly of the result of all their labours. "What did we aim at," he said, "but to have served his Majesty and to have done that which would have made him great and glorious? If this be a fault, then we are all criminous. . . . Since our counsels are no better acceptable, let us pray his Majesty's leave every man to depart home and pray God to divert those judgments and dangers which too fearfully and imminently hang over our heads."

Presently Eliot rose, and spoke as though choked with sorrow. He thought that there had been misrepresentations to the King. "It is said also as if we cast some aspersions on his Majesty's ministers. . . . I am confident that no minister, however dear, soever——"

He never finished his speech, for the Speaker, Sir John Finch, rose hastily, the tears streaming down his cheeks. "There is a command laid upon me," he said, "that I must command you not to proceed."

Sir John Eliot sat down, and Sir Dudley Digges cried out with a groan, "Let us sit in silence. We are miserable; we know not what to do."

For a time there was a deep and sad silence in the House, broken only by the sobs of men moved beyond their strength.

At last Sir Nathaniel Rich rose, unable to bear this dread silence longer. "We must now speak, or for ever hold our peace," he said. "For us to be silent when kings and kingdom are in this calamity is not fit. The question is whether we shall secure ourselves by silence, yea or nay? I know it is more for our security, but it is not for the security of those for whom we serve. . . . Let us go together to the Lords and show our danger, then we may go to the King together."

It was then resolved, "That the House be turned into a committee, to consider what is fit to be done for the safety of the kingdom, and that no man go out upon pain of going to the Tower."

But before the Speaker left the chair, still weeping, he

obtained leave to go out, and this being granted, he went straight to the King to lay before him the sorrow of the House.

As soon as he had gone, the old lawyer, Coke, rose in his place, and all his pent-up feelings were let loose in words of such glowing heat that he forgot all prudence, all Royal commands laid upon the House, all but the liberties of Parliament and People which he had striven for so long, and now were to be frustrated, as it seemed, through the evil influence of one man.

"Let us palliate no longer," he said. "If we do, God will not prosper us. I think the Duke of Buckingham is the cause of all our miseries; and till the King be informed thereof we shall never go out with honour, or sit with honour here; this man is the grievance of grievances. Let us set down the cause of our disasters, and all will reflect on him."

These words roused all the latent passion of those men whose ambitions had been highly strained throughout this great scene. "As when one good hound recover the scent," wrote a contemporary letter-writer, "the rest come in with a full cry, so they pursued it, and every one came on home, and laid the blame where they thought the fault was."

They were interrupted in this chorus of condemnation of the Duke by the return of the Speaker from the King, with a message that the House should rise until to-morrow morning. "What shall happen in the morning God of Heaven knows!" was the thought of many more than the man who put these words of gloom into his letter.

But on the day after this "Black Thursday," as it was called, when the members of the House of Commons were again preparing a Remonstrance to the King, they received an unexpected message from the Lords, desiring the Commons to join in a request to his Majesty for another answer to the Petition of Right. This was gladly agreed to, and Charles found himself faced not only by a hostile House of Commons, but by a united Parliament. He was compelled to yield, and the next day, coming down to the House of Lords, and summoning the Commons, declared his wish to have the Petition of Right read to him.

"The answer I have already given you," he said, "was made with so good deliberation and approved by the judgment of so many good men, that I could not have imagined but that

it would have given full satisfaction, but to avoid all ambiguous interpretations, and show you there is no doubleness in my meaning, I am willing to please you in words as in substance. Read your Petition, and you shall have an answer that I am sure will please you."

Then was read that appeal to the ancient constitution which, after the recital of various statutes, prayed of the kingdom "that no man be compelled to make or yield any gift, loan, benevolence, tax, or such like charge without common consent by Act of Parliament ; that none be called upon to make answer for refusal so to do ; that freemen be imprisoned or detained only by the law of the land, on any due process of law, and not by the King's special demand, without any charge ; that persons be not compelled to receive soldiers and mariners into their houses against the laws and customs of the realm ; that commissions for proceeding by martial law be revoked."

The King answered this Petition according to the ancient formula by which the Sovereigns of England gave their assent to Acts of Parliament : "*Le Droict soit faict comme il est désiré.*"

Then, rising, he spoke a few words in which his ill temper struggled with his desire to be gracious.

"This, I am sure is full," he said, "yet no more than I granted you in my first answer. You see now how ready I have showed myself to satisfy your demands ; so that I have done my part. Wherefore if this Parliament hath not a happy conclusion, the sin is yours. I am free of it."

The news that the Petition of Right had been granted caused extraordinary demonstrations of joy, such as had not been seen since the return of the Prince from Madrid. The streets blazed with bonfires far into the night, and the bells of the city churches rang out with glad peals. But whereas on that other day, when the two adventurers had returned from Spain Buckingham had been acclaimed as a hero, now his name was cursed in the same breath that shouted loyalty to Charles. Many believed that the Petition of Right was his death-warrant, and there were wild rumours that he had already been committed to the Tower. From York House to Whitehall the Duke may have looked down on the flames rising from the bonfires, and heard the crowds shouting his name with threats and curses ; and in that

hour he must have been filled with a great melancholy, and with wonder that he should be so hated in the nation though he had not spared himself in its service, and risked life itself and all most dear to him, in duty to his King and country. It was not in his nature to understand that the highest motives do not make amends for failure.

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CHAPTER XVI

THE ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE

ALTHOUGH the Commons had won a great victory after their long and heated strife, they did not rest from their labours nor rely solely on the Petition of Right to safeguard the liberties of the realm. That had set forth clearly and unmistakably the principles of the Constitution, but they decided to proceed with the Remonstrance in order to still further emphasize to the King the particulars of the grievances under which the country was suffering. The thought comes to one that there was something rather ungenerous in this. It was "rubbing it in," to use a popular phrase, with a vengeance. But the King's angry messages to the House, and Buckingham's attempt to vitiate the whole spirit of the Petition by adding the clause relating to the "Sovereign power," had roused the temper of the members in the Lower House. In spite of that command sent down to them by the King before his assent to the Petition, that they should not "meddle" with his Ministers, they deliberately exasperated him, directly naming the Duke in the Remonstrance as the cause of the national disasters. This accusation of Buckingham was not made without a heated debate, many believing that it was sufficient to imply the fact without stating it. Some of the members made a distinction that the Duke was "*the* cause of some and *a* cause of other grievances." It was but a subtle distinction, and they went on to accuse him of "the disaster of the armies, the decay of ports, trade, ships, and mariners." They also maintained that he was an evil influence in matters of religion, his mother being "a recusant and fosterer of recusants," and he employing Papists in the army and elsewhere, as witness the man Dalbier, "who betrayed our men at the Isle of Rhé." York House was also

notorious as the meeting-place of the "Arminians," or Catholic party in the English Church, "from whence is likely to follow innovation in government." Sir Robert Philips moved that the Declaration should run thus: "We conceive the greatness and power of the Duke of Buckingham is the chief cause of all these evils."

Buckingham was not entirely without friends to defend his honour in the Lower House. Sir Humphry May, one of his earliest friends, reminded the House of the King's desire that all personal aspersions should be put on one side, and that the King would take it as an argument of their moderation and judgment if they forebore in this. Sir Henry Martin defended the Duke's conformity to the Established Church, and that never had anything more grieved him than his mother's change of religion, so that he had used every means to convert her. As "for his own Lady, whom he found not firm in religion, he hath used means to confirm her." Sir Benjamin Rudyard bore witness that the Duke had done many great and good offices to the House. "If," he said earnestly, "the forfeiture of my life could breed an opinion that ye should have no occasion to complain of your next meeting, I would pawn it to you." Sir Thomas Jermyn stood up in defence of the Duke's adviser Dalbier, who, he said, had given great evidence of his trust and fidelity.

But these friendly voices were silenced by the hostile arguments of the majority in the House, Wentworth, Coke, and Selden being most resolute that the Duke should be named in the Remonstrance. This was eventually agreed to, and the Remonstrance was formally drawn up. After a rehearsal of the great fear entertained as to an innovation in religion owing to the leniency shown to the Catholics, and the favour toward the High Church party, a protest was made against the maladministration of the army and navy, and the ill conduct of the late expeditions to Calais, the Isle of Rhé, and Rochelle, which had "extremely wasted that stock of honour that was left unto this kingdom, sometimes terrible to all other nations, and now declining to contempt beneath the meanest."

In order that the King might have "more exact information," a "Kalendar of Particulars" accompanied the Remonstrance with regard to the decay of trade, the weakness of the

coast defences, and the inefficiency and corruption of the naval contractors.

Then the Remonstrance went directly to the root of the matter as it appeared to the majority of the House of Commons. "The principal cause of which evils and dangers," it said, "we conceive to be the excessive power of the Duke of Buckingham, and the abuse of that power: and we humbly submit unto your Majesty's excellent wisdom, whether it be safe for your self or your kingdoms, that so great power as rests in him by the Sea and Land should be in the hands of any one subject whatever. . . . And our humble desire is further, that your most excellent Majesty will be pleased to take into your most Princely consideration, whether, in respect the said Duke hath so abused his power it be safe for your Majesty and his kingdom to continue him either in his great offices or in his place of nearness and counsel about your sacred person."

Before this Remonstrance was presented to the King, the Subsidy Bill being delayed until he had received this (as though the pill and the jam should be taken together), the King, who was, of course, not ignorant of its contents, answered the denunciation of the Duke, not directly, but very significantly, by giving an order to the Attorney-General to expunge from the files of the Star Chamber Court all record of the Bill of Attainder or "Information" against him, "for that his Majesty is fully satisfied of the innocency of that Duke in all those things mentioned in the said information." But though the King showed them clearly that he would stand by Buckingham against all his enemies, and maintain his innocence and honour as he would his own, the proceeding of the Remonstrance had a profound effect upon the popular imagination. On the very day when it was resolved to name him as the cause of all the evils of the kingdom, that is on June 15, an extraordinary scene of violence took place in the streets of London, showing the intensity of hatred which inflamed the populace against the Duke and all suspected of being in league with him.

A notorious quack-doctor, astrologer, and potion-maker, one of that body of low scoundrels who pandered to the superstitions and evil passions of women like Lady Somerset and Buckingham's sister-in-law, Lady Purbeck (with whom he

undoubtedly had dealings), was supposed to be a panderer to Buckingham and his mother. It is not, of course, improbable that he had had some dealings with the Duke and the Countess, because they, like other people of their age, and like modern society, were prone to believe in crystal-gazing, fortune-telling, and other methods of getting a glimpse into the unknown. But, as a matter of fact, there is every reason to believe that Buckingham did not know this man and had never seen him. Be that as it may, this wretched creature was popularly known as "the Duke's Devil," and one evening as he was going through Moorgate a crowd followed at his heels and shouted that name at him. Lamb snarled back at them with curses, and then took refuge at a cook-shop, the mob watching him while he supped, and waiting like dogs at a rat-hole. When he came out they closed round upon him with greater menace, but he managed to get as far as the Windmill Tavern in Lothbury, where he again took shelter. But the tumult increased to such a pitch that the vintner, fearing that his inn would be sacked, "thrust the imaginary devil out of his house" by the back door. The mob soon began to hoot and shout at him, calling him a witch and a devil, and then began to stone him. The news of the tumult having reached the city authorities, the Lord Mayor sent a guard to rescue him, but seeing the officers approach the mob set on the unfortunate wretch, and knocked him about so unmercifully that he was nearly dead before the guard got him out of their clutches. In this condition they carried him to the Counter, a house in the Poultry, where the next morning he died in agony.* "Some say," says Mead, "that keeper got above 20*l*. by taking a groat apiece of such as came to see him when he was dead."

The fate of this impostor, who seems to have been of the vilest character, would not have been of great account but for the way in which his name was coupled with that of Buckingham. The mob that had mauled and mangled him had openly declared their hatred of "the Duke, his master," as they called him, and swore horribly that "had he been there they would have handled him worse, and would have minced his flesh, and had every one a bit of him." Two lines of doggerel verse were also openly sung in the streets—

* Rushworth, Mead, etc.

“ Let Charles and George do what they can,
The Duke shall dye like Doctor Lamb.”

On the night after the murder, a libel was taken down from a post in Coleman Street by a constable, who carried it to the Lord Mayor, and by him was sent by two sheriffs to the King, with orders that none other should see it. The gist of it was put into a kind of epigram :—

“ Who rules the kingdom ?—The King !
Who rules the King ?—The Duke ! !
Who rules the Duke ?—The Devil ! ! ! ”

Then said the authors of the libel, “ Let the Duke look to it,” for they intended shortly to use him worse than they did the doctor ; and if things be not shortly reformed, they will work a reformation themselves. Charles was highly incensed at these anonymous threats, and ordered a double guard to be on watch in the city every night. But no guards could restrain the satire and hatred of the London populace, and the foulest songs about the Duke were sung in the taverns, while threats and libels continued to be published. Buckingham had already been compelled to take notice of two libels brought to his notice. Two days before Lamb’s death, he rose in the House of Lords and said that he had been informed that one, Mr. Christopher Eukener, of the House of Commons, had affirmed that the Duke had spoken the following words at his own table : “ Tush ! it makes no matter what the Commons or Parliament doth, for without my leave and authority they shall not be able to touch the hair of a dog.” Buckingham protested upon his honour that he had never had those words so much as in his thoughts.

He then charged one, Mr. Melvin, with having spoken the most scandalous and libellous words against him, to the effect that he was plotting to dissolve Parliament and war against the Commonwealth with a great army of horse and foot ; that he had a counsel of Jesuits and Scotsmen, who met at his house every night between one and three o’clock ; that the blood of King James and the Marquis of Hamilton cried out for vengeance to Heaven, and that he had a cardinal for his uncle, or near kinsman, with whom he was in secret communication.

About this time Buckingham was grossly insulted by a man in the very presence of the King when they were at bowls

together in Spring Gardens. A Scotsman, named Wilson, seeing that the Duke had his hat on, snatched it off, saying, "You must not stand with your hat on before my King." Buckingham, deeply incensed, was about to kick him off the ground, when the King said, "Let him be, George; he is either mad or a fool." "No, sir," said the Scotsman. "I am a sober man; but this man's health is pledged with as much devotion at Dunkirk as your Majesty's own," meaning that the Duke was in league with the French. Then he took to his heels and escaped, but afterwards a warrant was made for his arrest.

On June 17 the Remonstrance was presented to the King by the Speaker of the House of Commons, in the banqueting-house; and at the same time the Bill of Subsidy was sent to the Lords. The King answered the Remonstrance curtly, saying that he did not expect such a thing after he had so graciously granted them the Petition of Right. As for their grievances, he would consider them as they should deserve. Buckingham, who was present, then fell on his knees, desiring the King's leave to answer for himself; but Charles would not suffer him to speak on the subject, and with every sign of affection before all assembled gave him his hand to kiss.

In the mean time a new and serious question had been raised in the House of Commons. Charles had issued instructions for the collection of tonnage and poundage, that is to say taxes on merchandise and shipping. This was considered a direct violation of the Petition of Right, which now declared that no taxes were to be levied without consent of Parliament, and the Commons at once proceeded to draw up another Remonstrance on that subject. But Charles was determined not to yield any further, and on June 21 he summoned the whole House to Whitehall, when he declared his intention of immediately ending the session.

"I am truly informed," he said, "that a second Remonstrance is preparing for me to take away the profit of my Tonnage and Poundage, one of the chief maintenances of my crown, by alledging I have given away my right thereto by my answer to your petition."

Clearly and emphatically he gave them to understand that he would not allow them to put any interpretation to his assent

to that petition which should intrench upon his constitutional prerogative according to the law of the land. Turning to the judges, he said that he addressed himself particularly to them: "For to you only, under me, belongs the interpretation of Laws, for none of the Houses of Parliament, either loyal or separate (whereat Doctrine soever may be raised) have any power either to make or declare a Law without my consent."

Then having given his Royal assent to the Bill of Subsidy and to other private Bills, he prorogued the Parliament until the 20th of October following.

CHAPTER XVII

BUCKINGHAM'S LAST VOYAGE

TOWARDS the end of April Lord Denbigh, after all his delays, at last got out of Plymouth Sound with his fleet and set sail for Rochelle, accompanied by the Rochellese officers who had returned with Buckingham after the retreat from the Isle of Rhé. But, upon reaching the Protestant port of France, Denbigh was staggered by the formidable obstructions to the harbour which had been built by Richelieu's instructions, and it seemed impossible to this man of little daring to make a successful attack. His want of confidence was shared by his officers, and his men had no spirit in them. After waiting a few days in doubt, Denbigh was seized with a sudden fear that the French might make use of the wind blowing from Rochelle to send down fire-ships into the midst of his fleet. He gave orders to weigh anchor and to retire to some distance away, but the signal was misinterpreted, and a part of the fleet, believing it to be an order to abandon the expedition, sailed for home. Thus deserted, the rest of the fleet followed the miserable example.

Charles was furious when the news reached him. "If the ships had been lost," he said, "I had timber enough to build more." He sent Denbigh's son, Lord Fielding, to Portsmouth, to urge his father to go back at all costs to Rochelle, and there await further supplies. But Denbigh had many excuses, as to his ships wanting re-victualling, and the sickness of his men, so that Charles had to yield to his pleas for delay, though not without bitterness and vexation of spirit. Buckingham shared his anger and impatience, and believing once again in his own power to succeed where others failed—forgetting his own failures—now pressed forward preparations to lead a new expedition in

person, in order to succour the Protestants of Rochelle, who were now in the last straits of starvation. After the Dissolution of Parliament, he remained for some time in London—the King preceding him to Portsmouth—hastening the supplies for his fleet, but finding his exertions met by a deadly inertia among his officers and officials. For the first time in his life, he became despondent. "I find nothing," he wrote to Lord Conway, "of more difficulty and uncertainty than the preparations here for the service of Rochelle. Every man says he has all things ready, and yet all remains as it were at a stand. It will be Saturday night before all the victuals will be aboard, and I dare not come from hence till I see that despatched, being of such importance." At last, however, he was able to go down to Portsmouth, and to complete his final business with the fleet.

While he was thus engaged, there was a man in London busy with black thoughts and preparations for an evil deed which would make all Buckingham's endeavours futile. It is a strange thing in life that one man's fate is so dependent on another's, and that two men moving, as it seems, in different spheres, are brought close together by a series of small links in a running chain. Buckingham, absorbed in business of State at Portsmouth, and surrounded by a brilliant company of courtiers, who paid homage to his greatness, never dreamed that his life had anything in common with a man starving in a London garret, or that the strength of the whole English fleet, upon which his ambitions were again staked, was of less importance to his own destiny than the strength of a tenpenny blade in a cutler's shop on Tower Hill. But so it was. John Felton, a young lieutenant who had served with him in Rochelle, and who had been wounded in his service, was only one among many thousands of soldiers who had just cause for discontent because their wages had been unpaid, but he happened to be the one man in whom this grievance rankled so deeply that it bred a black hatred in his brain, prompting him to take revenge. Felton, who belonged to a good old Suffolk family, was a man of education and serious character, who had nourished ambitions suitable to his rank in life. When the captain of his regiment was killed at Rhé, he expected and demanded promotion. But promotion in those days, as now, went by favour, and we know that Buckingham was constantly petitioned by

friends at home to find good places for their kinsmen. It is probable that the Duke put some young sprig of nobility into the dead captain's shoes, and it is certain that Felton was twice refused. This cast a gloom upon his spirit, and with a jealous nature breeding bile in him, he marked down the Duke as his personal enemy. When he returned to England, maimed in one hand, he found himself without means of livelihood, and without a prospect of getting a decent living. His arrears of pay amounted to about eight pounds, and, like many others, his petitions for payment remained unanswered. Too proud to go back to his family as a beggar, he stayed on in London, idle and moody, and getting deeply into debt. He passed the weary hours reading and brooding, and in his loneliness it seemed to him that not only his personal grievances, but the troubles of the whole nation, were centred in one man—that Duke who had denied him his step in the regiment. His reading strengthened this idea. Turning over the black-letter pages of the Remonstrance of the Commons, he read that the Duke was the public enemy, and the cause of all the miseries of the kingdom. Reading by the light of a guttering wick in his poor lodging the pamphlet of Dr. Eglesham, the physician of King James, there was blood before his eyes, and horrid spectres about him, pointing with accusing fingers to the figure of the Duke as a regicide and murderer. Reading again the current philosophy of popular leaflets, full of crude ideas of ever-weakening democracy, hinting at the gospel of revolution, he learnt that the deeds done for the commonweal were good and righteous, and that tyrannicide was honest work. There was one such book found in his trunk, called *Golden Epistles*.

In small chapels and churches in back streets, or from the mouth of a ranting preacher at St. Paul's Cross, he heard men denouncing in Puritan allegory the scarlet sins of the Court, and in low taverns in the city he heard men cursing the Duke and his master the Devil, or singing coarse ballads in which the name of Buckingham was foully used.

So gradually in the unhappy gentleman's mind there grew a purpose which became more fixed as the days passed, and his starving poverty seemed to promise nothing but a wretched death. He went about with a face on which was the tale of his despair and dark dreams, and one of his acquaintances, seeing

the poor wretch like this, tried to cheer him with a healthy rebuke: "It is not fit for a soldier to want courage." Felton answered with a sudden energy, "If I be angered or moved they shall find I have courage enough."

On the morning of the 19th of August he went out to Tower Hill, where he found a cutler's shop, and there, for tenpence, he bought that knife which destiny had sharpened on her grindstone. Perhaps, as he stood in the booth trying the metal of the blade with the hand that was not maimed, the cutler may have wondered for a moment whether this shabby, gloomy gentleman was going to take his own or some one else's life. It was not an uncommon thing for a dead body to be found by the watchmen in the narrow streets about the Tower, with a blade in a heart that had suddenly stopped beating. But business is business, and the cutler pocketed his pennies.

Felton went away, and sewed a sheath in his pocket for the knife, so that he might draw it out easily with one hand, his left being useless to him. Then, lest the world should think him a common murderer, who was, instead, a martyr to the commonweal (so he excused his contemplated crime), he sewed into his hat a paper, on which he had written two sentences as texts to justify his purpose:—

"If I be slain, let no man condemn me, but rather condemn himself. It is for our sins that our hearts are hardened and become senseless, or else we had not gone so long unpunished.

"JOHN FELTON"

And lower down:—

"He is unworthy of the name of a gentleman or soldier, in my opinion, that is afraid to sacrifice his life for the honour of God, his King, and country.

"JOHN FELTON" *

With these blurs scrawled upon the paper and hidden in his hat, though imprinted with fire upon his heart, Felton passed down Fleet Street and went into a church, where he left his

* This paper is now in the possession of the Earl of Jersey, descendant of Sir Edward Villiers, the Duke's brother.

name to be prayed for as "a man much discontented in mind." So do men invoke the name of God to do the devil's work. Then Lieutenant Felton, late of the King's army at Rochelle, set out on a long tramp to Portsmouth, getting a lift at times from a friendly waggoner. Five days later, on the eve of St. Bartholomew, the 23rd of August, he reached the seaport, which was crowded with soldiers and sailors, and fine gentlemen of fashion, while in the harbour lay the fleet which had given Buckingham a world of care.

On the very day before the Duke had been in great danger. One of his sailors, mutinous like many of his fellows at being dragged from home to go on a foreign service in rotten ships with stinking food, and with little prospect of pay, had cursed the Duke who was the cause of his wretchedness. There was too much of this conduct among the seamen, and the officers of the navy resolved to make a stern example of this man. He was tried by court-martial and sentenced to death. On his way to execution, a crowd of his comrades, inflamed with passion at the sight of this victim, who seemed to them a champion of their own grievances, attacked the guard and attempted his rescue. A desperate struggle took place, and Buckingham rode up with a cavalcade to defend the officers of the law against the angry mob of seamen. Followed by his horsemen, he rode in among them, driving them in retreat to their ships. In the turmoil two of the men were killed and many wounded. Then the Duke and his gentlemen formed themselves into an escort, and guarded the doomed man on his way to the gibbet. But for this mutiny his life would have been spared, for the Duchess of Buckingham, whose heart was always gentle and full of mercy, had interceded for the poor wretch. But in attempting his rescue his comrades had fastened the noose round his throat. For the sake of discipline there could be no pardon for him now. After the grim scene at the gallows, Buckingham rode back, but a menacing mob hung upon his heels, and anxious for his safety his officers ringed themselves about him, and so brought him to a house in the High Street, used as a lodging by Captain Mason, the treasurer of the army, with whom the Duke and his lady were staying.

It was an ugly incident. Significant not only of the mutinous temper of the seamen on the eve of departure for

active service, but of the personal danger threatening the Duke, who was so evidently the object of popular hatred. Friends ventured to warn him, but he laughed at their fears, as he had laughed at the reports of an attempt to be made upon him. When young Fielding tried to change clothes on the way to London, Buckingham's natural courage was not shaken by unsteady nerves. Sir Clement Throgmorton, a few weeks before, had begged him to wear a shirt of mail beneath his clothes. "It would be but a silly defence against any popular fury," answered the Duke; "as for a single man's assault, I take myself to be in no danger. There are no Roman spirits left." *

Yet, if we may believe a story told and vouched for by the Earl of Clarendon, Buckingham had received a supernatural warning of an untimely end. It is one of the ghost stories of history, and, says Clarendon, "upon a better foundation of credit than usually such discourses are founded upon." According to this curious tale, there was an officer in the King's wardrobe at Windsor Castle, of about fifty years of age, and of a good reputation for honesty and discretion, who had been befriended as a boy by Buckingham's father, Sir George Villiers. About six months before the Duke was at Portsmouth, on August 23rd, this man was in his bed at Windsor, when there appeared before him, about midnight, a venerable figure who drew the bed-curtains and, fixing his eyes on the King's servant, asked him if he knew him.

"The poor man, half dead with fear and apprehension, being asked the second time whether he remembered him, and having in that time called to his memory the presence of Sir George Villiers, and the very clothes he used to wear, in which at that time he seemed to be habited, he answered that he thought him to be that person. He replied he was in the right; that he was the same, and that he expected a service from him: which was that he should go to his son, the Duke of Buckingham, and tell him if he did not do something to ingratiate himself to the people, or, at least, to abate the extreme malice they had against him, he would be suffered to live a short time."

The ghostly figure then disappeared, and the wardrobe officer believed he had had nothing but a bad dream. But

* Wotton's "Reliquiæ."

twice more the apparition appeared, the third time very angry that his command had not been performed. Quaking with terror the man excused himself on account of the difficulty of obtaining admission to the Duke. Even if he could have speech with him, he should never be able to persuade him that he had been sent in such a manner. He would be taken for a madman.

"The Person" thereupon said that the access to his son was known to be very easy; and that few men waited long for him. Then, in order to gain credit for the message, the ghost told his old servant "two or three particulars which he charged him never to mention to any person living, but to the Duke himself, and he should no sooner hear them than he would believe all the rest he should say."

The man could no longer doubt that he had really been visited by a spirit, and he dared not disobey. He went up to London, and told part of his strange tale to one of the Duke's kinsmen, Sir Ralph Freeman. This gentleman was so impressed by the evident honesty and gravity of his visitor that he gained an appointment for him with Buckingham. It took place at Lambeth bridge, early in the morning, before the Duke went hunting with the King. Buckingham received the man courteously, and, says Clarendon, "walked aside in conference near an hour, none but his own servants being at that hour in that place: and they and Sir Ralph at such a distance that they could not hear a word, though the duke sometimes spake, and with great commotion, which Sir Ralph the more easily observed and perceived because he kept his eyes always fixed upon the Duke; having procured the audience upon somewhat he knew there was of extraordinary. And the man told him in his return over the water 'That when he mentioned those particulars which were to gain him credit, the substance whereof he said he durst not impart to him, the Duke's colour changed, and he swore he could come to that knowledge only by the devil, for that those particulars were only known to himself and to one person more, who, he was sure, would never speak of it.'"

After this strange interview, the Duke went hunting with the King, but he was observed to be very moody, and to take no pleasure in the sport. Before it was over he left the field and rode to his mother's lodgings in Whitehall, remaining shut up

with the Countess for the space of two or three hours. "The noise of their discourse," says Clarendon, "frequently reached the ears of those who attended in the next rooms, and when the Duke left her, his countenance appeared full of trouble, with a mixture of anger; a countenance that was never before observed in him, in any encounter with her: towards her he had ever a most profound reverence. And the Countess herself . . . was, at the Duke's leaving, found overwhelmed with tears, and in the highest agony imaginable."

The Earl of Clarendon concludes this extraordinary narrative by saying that "whatever there was of all this, it is a notorious truth that when the news of the Duke's murder (which happened a few months after) was brought to his mother, she seemed not in any degree surprised, but received it as if she had foreseen it; nor did afterwards express such a degree of sorrow as was expected from such a mother for the loss of such a son."

If Buckingham ever received a ghostly warning he either disregarded it, or steeled himself in the fatalist's philosophy that what must be must. A man who lives in continual danger is generally proof against nervous fears. Yet it is probable that although the Duke was inclined to discredit the idea of assassination, he had some foreboding that his life would not endure long. In bidding farewell to Laud, before going to Portsmouth, with the fleet bound for Rochelle, he begged him to put the King in mind of his poor wife and children. "Some adventure," he said, according to Sir Henry Wotton, "may kill me as well as another man." There were others who were afraid that this voyage would be fatal to him. On the very day on which death came to him, his sister, the Countess of Denbigh, wrote him a letter, and having "bedewed the paper with her tears," swooned away at the thought of his peril. Buckingham's death had been predicted to the very month by an extraordinary woman named Lady Eleanor Davies, fifth daughter of George Audley, Earl of Castlehaven, and wife of Sir John Davies. She had a gift for prophecy, and was once put on her trial, by the Government, for witchcraft. There is no doubt as to her foretelling that the Duke would die in August, for the prophecy is mentioned in a letter from Dr. Mead, written in June, before the event happened, and there are many other contemporary witnesses. It was one of those unlucky prophecies which are apt to fulfil

themselves by the power of suggestion. No doubt, also, the general disturbance of the country, the mutinies and disorders of the sailors and soldiers, the popular hatred against him, created naturally a grave state of uneasiness in the minds of those to whom he was dear, but those who believe in spiritual warnings may see in these warnings, fears, and psychological emotions portents of a supernatural kind. According to the Scottish historian Johnston, the Duke himself tossed uneasily in his sleep on the night of the 22nd of August, after the riot in Portsmouth town, and the awful scene at the gibbet, and in the morning, when his Duchess, Kate, pleaded him to take greater care of his person, he spoke irritably to her. She was, he thought, over-anxious, and had not yet reconciled herself to her husband's duty as a soldier. It is so difficult for a loving wife to suffer the thought of perils endangering the life of the one most dear to her, and of a long separation, with a daily torture of apprehension and uncertain news. Poor Kate had been worried almost to the grave during her husband's first exile at Rochelle, and now, after a few months, during which she had seen but little of him, he was again leaving her for the danger of camp-life, in that island of diseases and death. Her soul was perplexed by the sad riddle of life. Born and brought up as a Catholic, and still in her heart, no doubt, cherishing that faith which she had renounced for her husband's sake, she had no enthusiasm for this expedition on behalf of the French Protestants, and she knew that her husband was not inspired by any religious convictions in this enterprise. So she could not understand why the best man in the world, as he seemed to her, in spite of his faults and his indifference to any settled faith, should risk himself, and her own happiness, in such a false cause. She wept for him and for herself, and Buckingham was softened by this woman's weakness, and told her that he would take her importunity as a sign of love. It is good to think that this little scene between the husband and wife ended with caresses and endearing words. They were the last that ever passed between them.

The Duke came down at nine o'clock to make his toilet before breakfast in a room communicating by a dark passage with the central hall. The chamber where he was dressing was full of company, of persons of quality, among

whom was Monsieur De Soubise, brother of the Duc De Rohan, and other French gentlemen, and officers of the fleet and army. There was great excitement among them, for news had just been brought that Rochelle had been relieved, so that the voyage of the English fleet would not be needed, or at least was not so urgent. The Duke was much moved by this message, and ordering his breakfast to be made speedily, said he would make haste to acquaint the King with the good news, the Court being then at Southwick, the home of Sir Daniel Norton, five miles from Portsmouth.

But M. De Soubise and the French gentlemen did not give any credit to the news, and believed it was simply a false rumour sent by the enemy to delay the English expedition. They were, therefore, in much trouble and perplexity, and urged the Duke not to slacken the preparations for his voyage, nor to risk the safety of Rochelle by delaying the fleet. "The discourse," says Clarendon, "according to the natural custom of that nation, and by the usual dialect of that language, was held with that passion and vehemence, that the standers-by who understood not French did believe that they were very angry, and that they used the Duke very rudely."

Among those officers and gentlemen crowding the passage of Captain Mason's house in the High Street, and straining their ears to understand the meaning of this noisy conversation, was Lieutenant Felton, a travel-stained man who had walked most of the way from London, and was now standing at the entrance of the passage, very quietly, and with a haggard scowling face unnoticed by those about him, whose eyes were on the Duke and his companions.

Presently Buckingham, having finished his dress, was told that his breakfast was ready. He drew towards the door on his way to the central hall, and the hangings were held aside for him. Then in the passage he turned to speak to Sir Thomas Fryer, a colonel in the army, and a short man, so that Buckingham stooped to listen to a few whispered words in his ear. At this time Lieutenant Felton saw the opportunity the which he had been waiting. He saw that the moment had come for that deed which had been no doubt enacted a thousand times in his gloomy brain in the garret in London, and all the way to Portsmouth. With his right hand he pulled his tenpenny knife

from its sheath, and, taking a stride towards the Duke, plunged the blade with a swift and deadly stroke into his left breast. Buckingham staggered, gasped out a cry of "The villain hath killed me!" and then convulsively plucked out the knife. The blood gushed out, and Buckingham, after tottering for a step or two, lurched heavily against a table, and then fell dead to the ground.*

A scene of fearful confusion took place. The blow had been so swiftly and suddenly struck, and there were so many people about, that no one had seen the author of the deed. For a few moments it was believed by some that the Duke had been murdered by the French gentlemen, who had been talking so excitedly. But somebody picked up a hat, lying upon the ground near the door, and sewed inside it were words which showed them that the hat belonged to the murderer. Clarendon says that "the writing discovered nothing of the name," but we know now that Felton had put his signature boldly to his two texts. But at the cry that the hat was a clue to the assassin, the crowd rushed off to find a hatless man. Felton had slipped away to the kitchen, and being a stranger and without a hat, he was quickly discovered. There were shouts of "A Frenchman! A Frenchman!" and other people running up at the noise, cried, "Which is he? which is he? Where is the villain? Where is the butcher?" Confused by all this tumult, Felton thought they were crying his own name. He drew his sword, and the crowd fell back from him; then he stepped calmly into the hall, facing the crowd, and saying quite simply and quietly, "I am the man, I am he."

The officers and gentlemen rushed at the assassin and would have cut him to pieces with their swords. Felton seemed to welcome the thought of a quick death rather than deliberate justice, and opened his arms very calmly and cheerfully to their weapons, but Lord Dorchester and a few others thrust themselves before him, and commanded their friends to let the man be saved for the gallows.

In the meanwhile the extraordinary noise in the house had startled the ladies upstairs, and Lady Anglesea, the Duke's sister-in-law, had come out on to the gallery, from which the bedrooms were entered, and looked down at the crowd in the

* Clarendon, Dorchester, etc.

hall. Then the frightful sight of Buckingham's bleeding body met her eyes, and running back she flung open the door of the Duchess's chamber, and called to her. Kate Buckingham, who only half an hour or so before had felt her husband's kisses warm upon her cheek, rushed out in her night-dress with a great cry of terror, to look down upon the lifeless body of the man whom she had loved with a great passion, and a most faithful love. "Ah, poor ladies!" wrote Dudley Carleton, Lord Dorchester, who was an eye-witness of this scene, "such was their screechings, tears and distractions, that I never in my life heard the like before, and hope never to hear the like again."

The mortal remains of poor George Villiers were carried into an adjoining room, and there, while the gentlemen hurried out to tell the news to the world, lay, in the loneliness of death, the bleeding body of that man whose heart but a few minutes before had been beating with all the strength of healthy manhood, and with high hopes and great ambitions. That heart was still now, and all those ambitions that had led George Villiers into many rash deeds, many great follies, many passionate actions, were futile in the face of eternity. With his handsome face, that had first brought him his immense fortune and exalted rank, calm and cold as stone; with his body still clothed in that magnificence which had been his pride, the first Duke of Buckingham lay stiff and stark, while upstairs his poor wife wept her heart out. He had had many enemies in life, but in death his friends remembered the natural kindness of his heart, his generous instincts, his boyish gaiety, his gallantry, his courtesy, and charm of manner. The second voyage to Rochelle was never to be made with Buckingham as Lord-Admiral. His spirit had gone upon another voyage, across the dark and silent waters.

Six miles away was King Charles with his Court, still ignorant of the awful news that his friend, upon whose adventures his mind was busy, and whose career had been so bound up with his own, had been struck down by swift death. A messenger rode at a gallop to Southwick. "His Majesty," says Clarendon, "was at the public prayers of the church, when Sir John Hippeley came into the room with a troubled countenance, and, without any pause in respect of the exercise they were performing, went directly to the King and whispered in his ear what had fallen out. His Majesty continued unmoved and without the least

change in his countenance till prayers were ended, when he suddenly departed to his chamber and threw himself upon his bed, lamenting with much passion, and with abundance of tears, the loss he had of an excellent servant, and the horrid manner in which he had been deprived of him; and he continued in this melancholic and discomposure of mind many days."

Apart from the poor duchess, Kate, there was no one in the world who had more cause to mourn the death of Buckingham. Since their boyish quarrels in the last reign, they had been as close in affection as two brothers. Charles had made his father's favourite his adviser and confidant. In the Spanish journey they had gone upon an amorous adventure like two knight errants. During the stay at Madrid, Buckingham had shared secrets which his Prince could not reveal to any one else in the world, had counselled him more wisely than Charles had acted, and had cheered him in his discomfiture at home. In the first days of his reign till now, Buckingham had been his first Minister as well as his friend. All the Duke's actions had been done with the King's full sanction and authority, and had carried out his personal policy. When the Commons called Buckingham the enemy of the people and the cause of all the kingdom's miseries, when they had impeached him as a traitor to his King and country, when the people had nourished hatred for him, and written their songs and squibs in which they made him in league with the Devil to destroy the nation, Charles had known that Buckingham was accused of crimes which, if crimes, had been committed by royal command. And when, through many weary months, Buckingham suffered the hardships of an arduous campaign, exiled from all comfort, in hourly peril, cheering the soldiers in the trenches when his own heart was heavy, and when, after all his patience and energy and courage, he suffered failure and defeat, Charles knew and acknowledged that the Duke had failed, not from any fault of his own, but because in the deadly lethargy of the national spirit, it had been impossible to send him the promised support. With Buckingham struck from his side by the assassin's hand, Charles must indeed have felt robbed, not only of his dearest friend, but of the chief support of his Crown, and his most trusted counsellor. Buckingham was the companion of his mind as well as of his heart. Their political ideas had, as a rule, exactly coincided, or,

if they differed, Buckingham was always ready to obey. Charles, before he was King, and afterwards, had put his right hand upon the Duke's shoulder, as his most faithful friend and servant, and now that he was gone he felt alone, with a settled sadness upon his spirit, and very perplexed, not knowing what man to turn to, knowing no one who could take the place of "Steenie."

At Portsmouth John Felton was being questioned. To disconcert him and throw him off his guard, they told him that the Duke was only grievously wounded, and not without hope of recovery. But Felton smiled and said he knew well he had given him a blow that had determined all those hopes. In those days of spies and plots, it was suspected that he was the agent of the French or some other enemy, and they asked him "by whose instigation he had performed that horrid and wicked act." Felton answered calmly that "they should not trouble themselves in that inquiry; that no man living had credit or power enough in him to have engaged or disposed him to such an action; that he had never intrusted his purpose or resolution to any man; that it proceeded only from himself and the impulsion of his own conscience; and that the motives thereunto would appear if his hat were found, in which he had therefore fixed them, because he believed it very probable that he might perish in the attempt. He had confessed that he had come to the town but the night before, and had kept his lodging that he might not be seen or taken notice of; and that he had come that morning to the Duke's lodging, where he had waited at the door as if he held up the hanging; and Sir Thomas Fryer speaking at that time to the Duke, as hath been said, and being of a much lower stature than the Duke, who a little inclined towards him, he took the opportunity of giving the blow over his shoulder." *

The news of the Duke's death caused an extraordinary feeling of joy among the people, as though they had been rescued from some evil monster. In the taverns of London men raised their mugs and drank to Felton as a champion and hero. When he was taken up to London to be imprisoned in the Tower, great multitudes waited for him on the roadsides and prayed for him as though he were a saint on the way to martyrdom.

* Clarendon.

crying out "Lord comfort thee!" and "The Lord be merciful to thee!" As he passed through Kingston-on-Thames, an old woman gave him a salutation of, "Now, God bless thee, little David," meaning that he had killed Goliath. Outside the Tower a great crowd had gathered and gave him friendly greetings as the gates closed upon him.*

In the Tower he was put into the same lodging where Sir John Eliot had been, and was well treated—without any rigour and with humanity enough, says Clarendon. It was reported that his trial would be postponed until the Parliament met, but some said, "Pray God he be not racked and put to death before." There was some cause for this suspicion that he would be tortured, for Charles did actually ask the judges whether he could be put to the rack, believing that he had accomplices; but the judges answered unanimously in the negative.† At first Felton, impressed by the popular ovation at his crime, manifested the air of a man who believed himself justified before God as a martyr to the cause of righteousness, but gradually in the silence of his prison his sanity came back, and he showed deep contrition for his act. At his trial before the King's Bench Bar, on November 27th, he behaved "with great modesty and wonderful repentance; being, as he said, convinced in his conscience that he had done wickedly."‡ He begged the judges that the hand which had done the awful deed might be struck off before he was put to death. This was, of course, refused. On the 29th of November he was hanged at Tyburn, before a dense throng of men and women, who still hailed him as a martyr in the cause of liberty, though while the noose was about his neck he confessed loudly that he was guilty of a great crime.

"Being come to the place of execution," writes Mr. Pory to Mr. Mead, "he first gave God thanks for vouchsafing him so long a time for repentance, and also for removing the fear of death from him. He then magnified his Majesty's grace and clemency, and prayed God to give him a long and happy reign, and that his heart and the hearts of the parliament might be knit together. He prayed also for the King of Bohemia and

* The Rev. Joseph Mead to Sir Martin Stuteville.

† Rushworth.

‡ Clarendon.

the Queen, and last of all, our Queen. He extolled the Duchess of Buckingham for being so noble as to forgive him that heinous crime, and said he could have been content his body should suffer exquisite torture to have given her satisfaction."

One cannot help thinking that John Felton was rather too long-winded in his last oration, and descended into too many details, for Mr. Pory tells us that "he asked forgiveness of all the Duke's servants, even to the very scullion boy. He entreated the people not to abuse the poor hangman because he did his duty. In fact, those that stood by do report that he died a most pious, penitent, and undaunted death, and after he was cut down into the cart, he moved his lips and raised himself a little upon one end ; whereupon some bade an old woman that was in the cart with him (to lap him in his winding sheet) to give him *aqua vita*, which, when she either could or would not, they all curst her." His body was taken to Portsmouth to be hanged in chains in the sight of those among whom he had committed the murder.

In spite of his prolonged prayers for pardon, even from the Duke's "scullion boy," there were many people determined not to be robbed of a hero, and in their hatred of poor Buckingham they extolled his murderer. It was not only the common people who behaved in this way, but men of good birth and education. A master of arts of Oxford, and several times public orator of the University, named Zouch Townley, was so stirred by the assassination of the man whom he believed to have been a tyrant that, before the execution, he wrote an ode "to his confined friend, Mr. Jo. Felton," in which he paid homage to him in verse which at the time was thought to have Ben Jonson's ring :—

"Enjoy thy bondage, make thy prison know
Thou hast a liberty thou canst not owe
To those base punishments ; keep entire—
Nothing but guilt shackles the conscience.
I dare not attempt thy valiant blood to affray,
Enfeebling it with pity ; nor dare I pray
Thine act may mercy find, lest thy great story
Lose something of its miracle and glory.
I wish thy merits laboured cruelty—
Stout vengeance best befriends thy memory ;
For I would have posterity to hear,
He that can bravely do can bravely bear.

Tortures may seem great in a coward's eye,
It's no great thing to suffer, less to die.

* * * * *

Farewell ! For thy brave sake we shall not send
Henceforth commander's cronies to defend ;
Nor will it our just monarchs please
To keep an admiral to lose the seas.
Farewell ! undaunted stand, and joy to be
Of public sorrow the epitome.
Let the Duke's name solace and crown thy thrall—
All we for him did suffer—thou for all ;
And I dare boldly write as thou darest die,
Stout Felton England's ransom he doth lie."

Having thus paid a poet's tribute to the assassin, Zouch Townley wrote scornful lines for the epitaph on the murdered Duke:—

"If idle travellers ask, 'Who lieth here?'
Let the Duke's tomb this for inscription bear :
Paint Calais and Rhé, make French and Spanish laugh,
Mix England's shame, and there's his epitaph."

It was well for Ben Jonson's safety, as well as for his reputation as a poet, that the real author of this wretched verse was discovered. And it was lucky for Zouch Townley that he slipped over safely to the Hague before the hue and cry of the land had hunted him down.

Two other Oxford gentlemen let their passion against the dead Duke lead them into dangerous flights of fancy. Alexander Gill, a Bachelor of Divinity, and usher of St. Paul's School, was tried in the Star-chamber, with his friend, Mr. Grimkin, for saying in Trinity College cellar, at Oxford, that "The King was fitter to stand in a Cheapside shop with an apron before him, and say 'What lack ye?' than to govern a kingdom ; for saying that the Duke was gone down to Hell to meet King James there ; and for drinking a health to Felton, saying he was sorry Felton had deprived him of the honour of doing that brave act." *

The King's remarkable self-restraint when the news of Buckingham's death was first brought to him made many people believe that he was actually relieved at having been rid of a servant who was so out of favour with the nation, and against whose person the Parliament was so much prejudiced, to the damage of the King's own interests.

* Mead to Stuteville.

"Upon this observation," says Lord Clarendon, "persons of all conditions took great license in speaking of the person of the duke and dissecting all his infirmities, believing they could not thereby incur any displeasure of the King. In which they took very ill measures ; for from that time almost to the time of his own death, the King admitted very few into any degree of trust, who had ever discovered themselves to be enemies to the duke, or against whom he had ever manifested a notable prejudice. And sure never any prince manifested more a most lively regret for the loss of a servant than his Majesty did for this great man, in his constant favour and kindness to his wife and children, in a wonderful solicitous care for the payment of his debts (which, it is very true, were contracted for his service ; though in such a manner that there remained no evidence of it, nor was any of the Duke's officers intrusted with the knowledge of it, nor was there any record of it, but in his Majesty's own gracious memory),* and in all offices of grace towards his servants."

King Charles cherished the memory of the Duke as though it were a kind of sacred duty to advance his friends and followers to carry on the personal enmities of Buckingham. Mead heard from Mr. Pory, at Court, that "if any accuse him in anything whereof his Majesty might take notice, he imputes wholly to himself ; if in other matters, he answers, the party durst not say so if the Duke were alive. 'Besides,' he saith, 'Let not the Duke's enemies seek to catch at any of his offices, for they will find themselves deceived.' And whereas Sir Ralph Clare and Sir William Croftes, ever since they were turned out of their places in the Privy Chamber for opposing the Duke in the Second Parliament of King Charles, have lain within his Majesty's house at St. James's, now since the Duke's death his Majesty hath banished them thence also. His Majesty, since his death, hath been used to call him his martyr, and to say the world was much mistaken in him. For whereas it was commonly thought he ruled his Majesty, it was clear otherwise, having been his Majesty's most faithful and obedient servant in all things ; as his Majesty would make hereafter sensibly appear to the world."

Buckingham's funeral took place on September 11. Charles desired it to be solemnized with the fullest pomp, and the

* In one of Mead's letters it is said the amount of these debts was £66,000.

Duke's father-in-law, the Earl of Rutland, who was then Lord Treasurer, persuaded the King that the expense might be spared to go to the payment of his debts. It is probable also that they feared the public clamour which might arise if in the distressed state of the country and the poverty of the Treasury a great sum of money should be spent on doing honour to the mortal remains of the man who in life had been accused so violently by Parliament and people of extravagance ruinous to the nation. The excitement caused by his murder, and the general expressions of joy at his removal, made his friends fear that even a public funeral might be made the occasion of some horrible outrage in the streets upon his dead body, and for that reason the funeral *cortège* did not set out to Westminster Abbey from Wallingford House, in Whitehall, where the body had lain in state, until ten o'clock in the evening. It was asserted at the time that even then the hundred mourners, and the six bearers, who were all to form the procession that paid the last honours to the great Duke, attended upon an empty coffin, and the corpse itself had been buried the day before "as if it had been doubted the people, in their madness, might have surprised it."* As a further precaution, the train bands of London kept guard on both sides of the way from Wallingford House to Westminster, shouldering their pikes and muskets, instead of trailing them, as usual in mourning. So to the dull thunder of the drums passed the lifeless clay of George Villiers along that way where he had so often ridden magnificently with a brilliant cavalcade, amidst a crowd eager to gaze at his handsome face, and, at one time, loud in their homage to his greatness.

He was buried among kings, as he had lived among them, in Henry VII.'s chapel, and Charles earnestly desired to build a great monument to him. But again he was thwarted in his wish to do honour to his friend. "I would be loth" said the Earl of Rutland, the Lord Treasurer, "to tell your Majesty what the world would say, not only here but all Christendom over, if you should erect a monument for the Duke before you set up one for King James, your father." There was too much truth in these words for Charles to ignore them, and it was left for Kate Villiers to put up a tomb above her husband's dust. Gardiner has permitted himself a moment's relaxation from the

* Mead to Stuteville.

plain severity of his great history to indulge in a little sarcastic humour about this tomb.

"With an unconscious irony," he says, "the piled marble points the moral of the story of him who sleeps below. Unlike the figure of the Duke of Lennox, on the opposite side of the chapel, the form of Buckingham lies open to the eye of day without the superincumbent shadow of a canopy to shroud him from the crowd whose observation in life he used to court. The report of his actions is committed not to some 'star-ypointing pyramid' firmly and immovably based upon the firm earth, but to a sprightly Fame, who, with bursting cheeks, proclaims with a trumpet the great deeds of the Duke. On either side of her are two slender obelisks, which would evidently succumb to the first gust of wind that blew, and which rest upon a foundation of skulls. 'Dust thou art, and to dust thou shalt return' is the sentence written upon the works of him who has built his house upon the sand."

This sarcasm is not without truth, but in spite of the vanity and failure of his great political adventures, Buckingham's personal character appeals to the affection of posterity rather than to its satire or severity. And one at least of his contemporaries, who had the supreme gift of weighing all men in the nice balance of a calm and impartial judgment, has seen much good in him, and found extenuating circumstances for his faults.

"This great man," writes Lord Clarendon, "was a person of a noble nature and generous disposition, and of such other endowments, as made him very capable of being a great favourite to a great King. He understood the arts and artifices of a court, and all the learning that is professed there, exactly well. By long practice in business, under a master that discovered excellently, and surely knew all things wonderfully, and took much delight in indoctrinating his young unexperienced favourite, who, he knew, would be always looked upon as the workmanship of his own hands, he had obtained a quick conception and apprehension of business, and had the habit of speaking very gracefully and pertinently. He was of a most flowing courtesy and affability to all men who made any address to him; and so desirous to oblige them that he did not enough consider the value of the obligation, or the merit of the

person he chose to oblige, from which much of his misfortune resulted. He was of a courage not to be daunted, which was manifested in all his actions, and his contests with particular persons of the greatest reputation ; and especially in his whole demeanour at the Isle of Rhé, both at the landing and upon the retreat ; in both which no man was more fearless or more ready to expose himself to the brightest dangers. His kindness and affection to his friends was so vehement that it was as so many marriages for better or worse, and so many leagues, offensive and defensive ; as if he thought himself obliged to love all his friends, and to make war upon all they were angry with, let the cause be what it would. And it cannot be denied that he was an enemy in the same excess, and prosecuted those he looked upon as his enemies with the utmost rigour and animosity, and was not easily induced to a reconciliation. And yet there were some examples of his receding in that particular. And in the highest passion, he was so far from stooping to any dissimulation, whereby his displeasure might be concealed and covered till he had attained his revenge (the low method of courts), that he never endeavoured to do any man an ill office before he first told him what he was to expect from him, and reproached him with the injuries he had done, with so much generosity, that the person found it in his power to receive further satisfaction, in the way he would choose for himself. . . .

“His single misfortune was (which indeed was productive of many greater) that he never made a noble and worthy friendship with a man so near his equal, that he would frankly advise him for his honour and true interest against the current, or rather torrent, of his impetuous passions ; which was partly the vice of the time, when the Court was not replenished with great choice of excellent men ; and partly the vice of the persons who were most worthy to be applied to, and looked upon his youth, and his obscurity, as obligations upon him to gain their friendships by extraordinary application. Then his ascent was so quick, that it seemed rather a flight than a growth ; and he was such a darling of fortune, that he was at the top before he was seen at the bottom, for the gradation of his titles was the effect, not cause, of his first promotion, and, as if he had been born a favourite, he was supreme the first month he came to Court ; and it was want of confidence not of credit, that he had not all

at first which he obtained afterwards; never meeting with the least obstruction, till he was as great as could be: so that he wanted dependants before he thought he could want coadjutors. Nor was he very fortunate in the election of these dependants, very few of his servants having been over-qualified enough to assist or advise him, and were intent only upon growing rich under him.

"Let the fault or misfortune be what or whence it will, it may very reasonably be believed that, if he had been blessed with one single friend, who had been qualified with wisdom and integrity, that great person would have committed as few faults, and done as transcendent worthy actions, as any man who stirred in such a sphere in that age in Europe. For he was of an excellent nature, and of a capacity very capable of advice and counsel. He was in his nature just and candid, liberal, generous, and bountiful; nor was it ever known that the temptation of money swayed him to do an unjust or an unkind thing. And though he left a very great inheritance to his heirs, considering the vast fortune he inherited by his wife, the sole daughter and heir of Francis, Earl of Rutland, he owed no part of it to his own industry or solicitation, but to the impatient humour of two Kings his masters, who would make his fortune equal to his titles, and the one as much above other men, as the other was. And he considered it no otherwise than as theirs, and left it at his death engaged for the Crown, almost to the value of it, as is touched upon before.

"If he had an immoderate ambition, with which he was charged, and it is a weed (if it be a weed) apt to grow in the best soils, it does not appear that it was in his nature, or that he brought it with him to the Court, but rather found it there, and was a garment necessary for that air. Nor was it more in his power to be without promotion and titles and wealth, than for a healthy man to sit in the sun in the brightest dog-days and remain without any warmth. He needed no ambition, who was so seated in the hearts of two such masters."

To such a noble judgment, critical and well-poised and as free from adulation as from malice, there is little to be added.

Looking back upon Buckingham's career after nearly three centuries since his passionate heart was stilled by a swift knife-thrust, we may be more or less severe than Lord Clarendon

who knew him in his living splendour, and it is, perhaps, unnecessary that we should painfully endeavour to give a final verdict upon his character, weighing this evidence and that, finding him guilty of one thing and innocent of another, and exactly measuring the right proportions of praise and blame due to him in strict equity. All that matters very little now, to Buckingham or to us. In three centuries the effects of his follies have been cancelled by other men's foolishness, or wisdom, and his vices and virtues have no longer any influence upon the lives of others. It has fortunately gone out of fashion to grow passionate over the characters of history, to turn sinners into plaster saints, or to drag corpses out of the grave in order to dissect them ghoulishly. Nor need the biographer now, as was the custom formerly, hold up his victim or his hero, to point portentous morals, profound in their revelation of the author's self-righteousness. We are not so much concerned with the measurement of a man's soul according to the foot-rule of our contemporary moral codes, as with the facts of his life as they may be truthfully known, and with the heart of the man as it was self-revealed, the interest of getting close to one who made history and of living as it were in his life, being the reward of one's research and reading. In this life of Buckingham, the interest of the story should not flag.

From his first appearance at the Court, his career was dazzling and full of great adventures. No character in romance is more attractive to the imagination. The age in which he lived, with its decadent luxury of the Court, with its surface splendour, that covered much brutality and misery; with its superstitions breeding dark and horrid vice such as was revealed in the trial of Somerset's wife and of Lady Purbeck, with its passion, and afterglow of an ancient chivalry, allowing of such adventures as the Spanish journey, and Buckingham's romantic episode at the French Court; with its opportunities for individualism and originality of character bringing forward many adventurers of fortune; with its awakening of the spirit of democracy to struggle for liberty against the old prerogatives of rank and wealth; all this places the figure of Buckingham in the centre of a great and moving drama. Yet seldom is he obscured by what goes on around him. He takes the centre of the stage, a figure of extraordinary brilliance and magnificence,

debonair and very daring, himself the greatest adventurer among adventurers, a gambler losing every move in the game of world-politics, yet winning everything at home with all the Court cards in his hands, defying all private and public enemies, and rising from nothingness to supreme power in the kingdom. That is a greater wonder than England has often seen, and suffices to keep one's interest chained to his career. But one is not only dazzled by Buckingham's public career. One is able to see him more intimately in his private life, to see him closely as a lover, as a husband, as a father, and as a friend. His letters reveal him with most vivid, intimate touches, so that he breathes out of them, and in the whole range of English letters there are not more touching, nor more sweet womanly letters than those written by Duchess Kate to her beloved lord. So we have the portrait of him in every phase of his life, as bright and distinct as a living image.

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